The Ramayana of Valmiki

A Complete Modern English Translation



Translated By

Hari Prasad Shastri

THE RAMAYANA OF VALMIKI

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Vol. I.

BALA KANDA

AYDOHYA KANDA

SHANTI SADAN
29 CHEPSTOW VILLAS
LONDON, W.11
1952

Printed in Great Britain
at the BURLEIGH PRESS, *Lewins Mead*, BRISTOL

DEDICATED TO

LISL FUCHS AND MARJORIE ROBLEY

CONTENTS

Book I—Bala Kanda

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

Book II—Ayodhya

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

WESTERN culture is only just beginning to look beyond the Roman and Greek civilizations for new inspiration. Even so, it is a little surprising that, although the mighty epics of the Iliad and the Odyssey are widely known and loved, only a few scholars have studied their Hindu counterparts known as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. In fact no good complete[1] modern English translation of the Ramayana exists, and the best of those made in the last half of the 19th century are unobtainable outside the larger libraries.

The Ramayana is a work of great antiquity attributed to the illustrious Sage Valmiki. Its date of composition cannot be fixed with any certainty, particularly as, in common with other Sanskrit classics, it was not at first committed to writing, but was passed on from singer to singer. This process also accounts for the fact that the various versions (*Sakhas*) of the poem that have come down to us differ slightly in context. The interesting fact is that the scholars are agreed that the Ramayana is the grandly conceived and executed masterpiece of one poet, and not a collection of stories from many sources, loosely gathered together.

Unfortunately we know very little about the Rishi Valmiki, whose title 'Adikavi' (First poet) and pre-eminence in Sanskrit verse has never been seriously challenged to this day. He was a robber chief in a forest in Northern India and on one occasion waylaid two ascetics for the purpose of plundering them. The travellers, however, spoke to him with kindness, and offered him the spiritual truth in lieu of the gold and silver which they did not possess. Convinced of their sincerity and on their advice, Valmiki changed his mode of life and became a devotee of Shri Ramachandra, the Seventh Incarnation of God (Vishnu)

[1] The version of Ramayana included in *Hindu Scriptures* is a much abbreviated edition of the original, most of the legends being omitted.

on earth. After a long period of meditation on the form and virtues of Shri Rama, it is said that he was granted a vision of Rama's life from beginning to end.

He gave expression to this unique experience, in Sanskrit verse, in the 24,000 *slokas* (48,000 lines) known as the Ramayana. The *sloka* is a specific metre which the poet himself discovered, as is told in a beautiful passage in the first book.

The poem is divided into seven books (*Kandas*) of unequal length, which may be very briefly summarised as follows :—

Book I. (*Bala-Kanda.*) King Dasaratha of Ayodhya (Oudh), performs a sacrifice in the hope of obtaining a son. At this time the Gods (*Devas*) are alarmed at the power acquired by the mighty Titan named Ravaṇa, who, by the practice of black magic had conquered almost all of the known world. King Dasaratha's prayer is answered and his three wives bear four sons, Rama, Bharata and the twins Lakshmana and Shatrughna, who are all partial incarnations of Shri Vishnu. Vishnu, however, manifests himself more fully in Shri Rama than in the other brothers. The boys grow up and Shri Rama wins as his bride, Sita, the daughter of King Janaka of the neighbouring kingdom of Videha.

Book II. (*Ayodhya-Kanda.*) King Dasaratha intends to proclaim Shri Rama heir-apparent, but the jealousy of his second queen, Kaikeyi, is aroused and she holds the king to a promise made formerly, that he would grant her two boons. The boons she now secures are the banishment of Shri Rama to the forest for fourteen years, and the installation of her own son Bharata as *Yuvaraja*.[1] According to the law of righteousness (*dharma*) a vow must be honoured, and Shri Rama calmly accepts the sentence of exile. He travels south to Chittrakuta in the Dandaka Forest with his wife Sita and his brother Lakshmana. King Dasaratha dies of grief and Bharata implores Shri Rama to return to the throne, but the latter adheres firmly to the vindication of his father's honour and the fulfilment of his vow.

Book III. (*Aranya-Kanda.*) After about ten years in the forest with her husband, Princess Sita is kidnapped by the Titan Ravana, and taken by him to his capital, Lanka (the modern Ceylon).

[1] *Yuvaraja* = heir-apparent.

Book IV. (*Kishkindhya-Kanda.*) Rama and Lakshmana in pursuit of Ravana and to rescue Sita, enlist the aid of King Sugriva, leader of the monkey tribe, whose chief minister Hanuman becomes the foremost devotee and servant of Shri Rama. Help also comes from Vibishana, brother of Ravana, who has openly disapproved of the Titan king's conduct, and warned him of the retribution he may expect for his unrighteous actions.

Book V. (*Sundara-Kanda.*) The monkey armies reach the south coast of India, and, bridging the straits, gain entry into Lanka.

Book VI. (*Lanka-Kanda.*) After a series of pitched battles, Lanka is captured and Ravana is slain by Shri Rama. Sita demonstrates her purity and faithfulness to her husband, by successfully undergoing the ordeal by fire. The period of fourteen years' exile is by now completed, and Shri Rama returns with his consort, his brothers and allies, to the capital Ayodhya, where he begins a long and glorious reign.

Book VII. (*Uttara-Kanda.*) This ' later section ' or epilogue, describes the doubts raised in the minds of the citizens concerning the purity of Sita, and how they compel Shri Rama to send her to Valmiki's hermitage in the forest where she gives birth to twin sons, Kusha and Lava. When these boys grow up, they return to Ayodhya and are recognized by Shri Rama, who subsequently brings Sita back to share the ruling of the kingdom with him.

This in outline is the story of the Ramayana, which, in the poetic grandeur of the original, as well as in the later Hindi work on the same theme by Goswami Tulsidas, has exerted a tremendous influence on the men and women of India. It is not only poetry of unsurpassed dramatic power and brilliance, it is a treasure-house of information on rhetoric, medicine, geology, botany, geography and every facet of the ancient civilization, with which learned scholars may interest themselves. For every Hindu, Shri Rama and Sita are the ideal man and woman, the model husband and wife. Shri Rama is an incarnation of God, the One all-pervading Principle of Truth and Intelligence, and what higher pattern for one's life could be chosen than this man of perfect virtue, a lover

of truth, compassionate, just, benevolent, valorous and *chivalrous ?*

The story may also be taken as an allegory. Symbolically Rama and Ravana represent the forces of light and darkness operating in the human heart, as well as in the world. Truth, benevolence, mercy and righteousness are the forces of Light which are opposed by greed, lust, love of pleasure and power, anger and egoity. The real triumph of man means conquest of the forces of darkness. In India a festival is celebrated each year on the day traditionally held to be that on which Ravana fell and the rule of tyranny, injustice, savagery and unrighteousness ended.

Mention has already been made of Tulsidas' later Hindi epic on the life of Shri Rama, which is probably the most widely read of all in the present day. One version of the story also forms an episode in the Mahabharata and another comparatively modern treatment of it is the Adhyatma Ramayana ascribed to the Sage Vyasa.

The Sage Valmiki himself wrote a long metaphysical classic known as the Maharamayana or Yoga Vasishtha, which deals with the inner development of Shri Rama as opposed to his outer deeds and which remains one of the most authoritative and respected philosophical treatises of Vedanta.

The life of Shri Rama has entered into the consciousness of the Indian people, and much art and literature, such as Bhababhuti's dramas, draw their inspiration from it. The words of Brahma in the Ramayana have proved so far to be no idle boast: " So long as mountains and rivers have place on the earth, the story of the Ramayana will be told in the world."

The aim of the translator is to make the story known to English readers in a complete form, the first part of which is published in this volume. Although it is not possible to reproduce the beauty of the original poetic form, the true spirit of Valmiki's masterpiece is here preserved and for those who have vision, the whole significance of its spiritual purpose will be apparent.

BOOK I

BALA KANDA

CHAPTER I

Shri Narada relates to Valmiki the story of Rama

THE Sage Valmiki,[1] chief among the munis[2] and the most eloquent of men, constantly engaged in the practice of self-control and the study of the holy scriptures, enquired of Shri Narada :[3]—

" Who is there in the world to-day, endowed with excellent and heroic qualities, who is versed in all the duties of life, grateful, truthful, firm in his vows, an actor of many parts, benevolent to all beings, learned, eloquent, handsome, patient, slow to anger, one who is truly great ; who is free from envy and when excited to wrath can strike terror into the hearts of celestial beings ? O Sage, I would hear of such a man from thee, who art able to describe him to me."

Narada, acquainted with the past, the present and the future, pleased with the words of the Sage Valmiki, answered him saying :—

" Rare indeed are those, endowed with the qualities thou hast enumerated, yet I can tell thee of such a one. Born in the family of Ikshwaku,[4] he is named Rama ;[4] one renowned, fully self-controlled, valorous and illustrious, the Lord of All. Wise, conversant with the ethical code, eloquent, fortunate, a slayer of his foes, broad-shouldered, long-armed, possessing a conch-shaped neck and prominent chin, eminent in archery, with a muscular body, arms extending to the knees, and a noble head and brow ; of mighty prowess ; possessing well-

[1] Valmiki. Once a robber chief, became later a fully illumined sage, author of *Ramayana*.
[2] Muni. A holy sage, a pious and learned person.
[3] Narada. A great rishi, son of Brahma, the Creator. Many hymns of the Rig-veda are attributed to him.
[4] Ikshwaku. Son of Manu, founder of the Solar race of kings, who reigned in Ayodhya.

proportioned limbs and skin of bluish tint,[1] one renowned for his virtue; of prominent eyes, deep-chested, bearing auspicious marks; one who protects those who take refuge in him and is ever-mindful of the good of those dependent on him; true to his promises, benevolent to his subjects, omniscient, renowned for his good deeds, pure, and ever responsive to devotion; meditating on his own essence.

" Equal to Brahma, the Protector of his people, pleasing to look upon; supporting the universe; the destroyer of those who contravene the moral code; the inspirer of virtue; the giver of special grace to his devotees and to those who duly observe sacrificial rites and are charitable; conversant with the essence of the Vedic philosophy; an adept in the science of warfare; skilled in the scriptural law; of infallible memory; beloved of all; of courteous disposition; incapable of cowardice; acquainted with the laws of this world as also of the other worlds.

"As the rivers hasten to the ocean, so do men of virtue ever approach him.

" Equal to Vishnu[2] in valour; grateful to the sight as the full moon; when stirred to righteous anger, resembling all-consuming death; in patience like the earth, in generosity like Kuvera;[3] in truthfulness the personification of virtue. Such are his great qualities—Rama, the beloved heir of King Dasaratha, possessing every excellent attribute, benevolent to all, devoted to the welfare of every living being."

His father, King Dasaratha, made preparations to install him as his regent, but the Queen Kaikeyi, claiming the boons formerly promised to her, demanded the exile of Rama and the enthronement of her own son Bharata. The king held by his promise and by the ties of honour, sent his son Rama, whom he loved as his own life, into exile. Obeying the command of his royal sire, and in order to gratify Kaikeyi, Shri Rama went to the forest.

The son of Queen Sumitra, Prince Lakshmana, inspired by affection and humility, followed his brother Rama into exile.

[1] bluish-tint. The Incarnations or Divine Descents called Avataras are said to have the colour of a new-born cloud.
[2] Vishnu. The Lord as Maintainer and Supporter of the Universe.
[3] Kuvera. The God of wealth.

The daughter of King Janaka, an incarnation of Lakshmi,[1] endowed with the highest feminine virtues, seeing Prince Lakshmana accompanying Rama, obedient to her lord, followed him as Venus follows the moon.

Accompanied for some leagues by King Dasaratha and his people, Rama dismissed the chariot on reaching the town of Shringavera on the banks of the Ganges, and commanded the minister Sumantra to return to the capital.

Here the prince met his beloved Guha, the chief of the Chandalas,[2] accompanied by whom, with Lakshmana and Sita, he crossed the river Ganges and entered the forest, arriving at length at the Chittrakuta mountain described by the Sage Bharadwaja. Rama, Lakshmana and Sita dwelt happily in the forest like devas[3] or gandharvas.[4]

Overwhelmed with grief at the separation from his sons and lamenting their absence, the king departed this life, while Rama was dwelling on the Chittrakuta mountain.

The holy sages offered the throne, left vacant on the death of King Dasaratha, to Prince Bharata, who declined it, not desiring the kingdom. Setting forth to the forest where Shri Rama dwelt, in order to propitiate him, he approached that hero of truth with humility and directing his attention to the code of justice with which he was conversant, requested Rama to return and govern the kingdom.

The magnanimous, handsome and mighty Rama refused to accept the throne, preferring to carry out the command of his sire and, presenting Prince Bharata with his sandals as a symbol of authority, repeatedly exhorted him to return to the capital.

Shri Bharata, touching the feet of Rama in submission, departed and began to rule the dominion from the town of Nandigrama, while eagerly awaiting the return of his brother.

The sages and hermits, who dwelt in the forest, constantly harassed by asuras,[5] approached Shri Ramachandra to ask for his protection—Shri Rama agreed to slay the evil asuras in order to preserve the Sages who had sought his help. The holy

[1] Lakshmi. The consort of Shri Vishnu. q.v.
[2] Chandalas. Outcast.
[3] Devas. Gods or celestial beings, literally "shining ones".
[4] Gandharvas. Heavenly musicians.
[5] Asuras. A race of demons.

men, whose appearance equalled the fire in lustre, heard of Shri Rama's resolve and were assured by him of his protection.

The female asura Shurpanakha, who could assume various forms at will, was overpowered and disfigured by Rama and Lakshmana. All the wicked rakshasas[1] came led by Khara, Dushana and Trishira, to engage in combat with Shri Rama, and were slain by him. Shri Rama slew fourteen thousand rakshasas who dwelt in that forest. Hearing of the slaughter of the rakshasas, King Ravana transported with rage, took with him Maricha, a demon like himself. Maricha, knowing the superior strength of Rama, sought to dissuade Ravana from entering into combat with him, but Ravana who was marked down by destiny, disregarded the advice and went with Maricha to Shri Rama's abode. There, Maricha lured Shri Rama and Lakshmana away from the hermitage, and Ravana, having slain the vulture Jatayu, carried Sita away.

Learning from the dying Jatayu of the abduction of the daughter of the King of Mithila, Shri Rama was overwhelmed with grief and began to mourn.

Having performed the funeral rites of the vulture, while wandering in search of Sita, he encountered an asura named Kabandha whose form was menacing and terrible.

Shri Rama slew him and then performed the funeral rites whereupon his soul ascended to heaven. While passing to the celestial sphere, Kabandha spoke to Rama of Shabari, a female ascetic, and entreated him to visit her. Shri Rama, the ever resplendent Destroyer of his foes, came to where Shabari dwelt and was duly worshipped by her.

On the banks of the Lake Pampa, Shri Rama met the monkey Hanuman who presented Sugriva to him. The mighty Rama related the whole of his story to him as far as the abduction of Shri Sita. Sugriva having listened to Shri Rama entered into the rite of friendship with him, witnessed by the fire. With full faith in Rama, Sugriva then recounted to him all the sufferings he had endured through his enmity with Bali[2] and the great daring of the latter. Then Shri Rama vowed to

[1] Evil spirits or fiends, enemies of the gods.
[2] Bali or Vali—a Titan King, son of Virochana, son of Prahlada.

slay Bali, but Sugriva, uncertain of Rama's prowess and desiring to test him, showed him the bones of the body of Dundhubi,[1] forming a heap as high as a mountain. With his foot, Rama kicked the heap to a distance of ten yojanas and, discharging an arrow, pierced seven palmyra trees, cleaving a mountain and with the shaft penetrating to the centre of the earth. Having witnessed this exploit, Sugriva was satisfied, and thereafter trusted Rama implicitly. In his company he passed through deep valleys to the town of Kishkindhya ; there, the yellow-eyed Sugriva roared like thunder. At this terrible sound, the powerful and valiant monkey chief, Bali, issued forth, disregarding the warning of his wife Tara, and engaged in combat with Sugriva.

As desired by Sugriva, Shri Rama slew Bali with a single arrow ; then he entrusted the government of Kishkindhya to Sugriva who now, as king of the monkey tribe, gathered his forces together and dispatched them to every quarter in search of Sita.

The vulture chief, the courageous Sampati, informed Hanuman where Sita was, whereupon the monkey leapt over the sea that lies between Bharatvarsh[2] and Lanka,[3] a distance of five hundred miles.

Entering the city of Lanka that was protected by Ravana, Hanuman beheld Sita, meditating on Rama in the ashoka garden. He there delivered Rama's ring to her and acquainted her with the welfare of her lord. Having revived the courage of Sita, he shattered the gate of the garden and slew seven sons of the counsellors of Ravana, five great captains and levelled Akshyakumara, the son of Ravana, to the dust. Then he suffered himself to be taken captive.

Knowing he could not be subdued by the weapon granted by Brahma to Ravana, yet acknowledging the power of its blessing,[4] Hanuman allowed himself to be imprisoned, suffering many indignities. Subsequently he burnt the whole of Lanka, only sparing the place where Sita dwelt.

[1] Dundhubi—a giant.
[2] Bharatvarsh—India.
[3] Lanka—Ceylon.
[4] The God Brahma had given Ravana a weapon which entangled everyone on whom it was used so that they could not escape. It was fitting, therefore, that Hanuman, though not subject to it, should acknowledge the god's power.

Returning to deliver his welcome tidings, he respectfully circumambulated the mighty Rama and recounted in detail how he had found Sita.

Setting out in the company of Sugriva and others, Rama reached the sea. There he created a tempest by his shining arrows and the Lord of the waters, Sumudra, appeared before him. Under his direction, Nala threw a bridge over the sea. Crossing the sea by means of this bridge, Shri Rama entered Lanka, slew Ravana in battle and recovered Sita, but she being the subject of slander, was addressed by him with harsh words in the midst of the assembly. After hearing the words of Rama with forbearance, Sita entered a great fire. On the testimony of the fire god, Sita was proved to be innocent and Rama, adored by all the gods, was content.

The animate and inanimate beings of the three worlds,[1] the gods and the sages, gave thanks that Ravana had been slain by Shri Rama. Shri Rama enthroned Vibishana[2] as the king of the asuras and, being wholly satisfied, revived all the monkeys and asuras who had fallen in battle.

In the aerial chariot, Pushpaka, accompanied by Sugriva, Shri Rama, a devotee of truth, reached the hermitage of Bharadwaja. From there, he sent Hanuman to Prince Bharata, as his messenger and conversing with Sugriva again mounted the aerial chariot and arrived at Nandigrama.

Ever obedient to his father, Shri Rama then cut off his matted locks and with Sita occupied the throne of Ayodhya.

Seeing Shri Rama occupying the throne, the people were happy and satisfied, virtuous and free from sickness, sorrow, famine or danger. None witnessed the death of his son; no woman became a widow and all were devoted to their husbands; there was no danger from tempests; none perished by water; nor was there any cause of fear from fire; fever and plague were unknown; there was no want, and no danger from thieves. Cities and villages were rich and prosperous; all lived happily as in the Satya Yuga.[3]

Shri Rama and Sita observed countless Vedic sacrifices and

[1] Bhur, bhuvah, swah. The lower, middle and upper worlds.
[2] Bibishana or Vibishana. Younger brother of Ravana, but a devotee of Rama.
[3] Satya-Yuga. The golden age.

gave much gold, and hundreds of thousands of cows in charity, thus preparing for themselves a place in the divine regions. Shri Rama added incalculably to the prosperity of the dynasty, and bestowed immense wealth on the brahmins. He employed his subjects in the duties of their respectives castes and ruled for eleven thousand years, after which he returned to his celestial abode, Vaikuntha.

He who reads the story of Rama, which imparts merit and purity, is freed from all sin. He who reads it with faith and devotion is ultimately worshipped together with his sons, grandsons and servants at his death.

A brahmin[1] reading this becomes proficient in the Vedas, and philosophy; a kshatriya[1] becomes a king; a vaishya[1] grows prosperous in trade; a shudra,[1] on reading this will become great in his caste.

CHAPTER 2

Sage Valmiki creates the metrical form for the story

THE wise and eloquent Valmiki with his disciple, Bharadwaja, having listened to the words of Narada, was filled with wonder and worshipped Rama in his heart. He offered obeisance to Shri Narada, who craved permission to depart and on his request being granted he ascended through space to the heavens.

Narada, having departed, the great Muni Valmiki proceeded to the banks of the river Tamasa, which was close to the Ganges. Reaching that place and seeing the pure and limpid waters, Valmiki said to his disciple: " O Bharadwaja, behold how pure is the water of the holy river, verily it is clear and pleasant like the mind of a good man. O Child, set down the waterpot and fetch me my bark robe from the hermitage. I wish to bathe in the sacred stream, delay not."

Obedient to the command of his Guru,[2] the disciple brought

[1] The four traditional castes; the priests, the warriors, the merchants and those who serve the other three

[2] Guru. Traditional spiritual preceptor.

the raiment from the Sage's hermitage and returning speedily, offered it to him. Receiving the robe of bark from the hands of his disciple, the sage, with his senses fully controlled, girded it about him and while bathing repeated the traditional prayers, offering libations of water to his ancestors and the gods. Then he wandered about in the forest enjoying the beauties of nature.

Now the august sage, Shri Valmiki, beheld a pair of Krauncha[1] birds fearlessly disporting themselves in love. Soon after, a fowler stealing up unobserved, slew the male bird in the presence of the sage. The female bird, deprived of her yellow crested companion, who but now had been spreading his wings in the act of love to please her, perceiving him bleeding and crying out in distress, began to mourn.

The heart of the sage was filled with pity on seeing the bird struck down by the fowler. Touched by the lament of the female krauncha and incensed by the cruel act of the fowler, the sage said: "O Fowler, having killed the bird in the midst of the enjoyment of love with its mate, thou shalt never attain prosperity. Do not visit the forest for many years lest evil overtake thee."

Reflecting on the words he had addressed to the fowler and realising their implication, the sage said to himself: "What words are these that I have uttered, inspired by my compassion for the dying bird?"

The wise and learned sage reflected a moment, and then said to his disciple: "Grieving for the dying bird, I have recited this verse of four feet, each of equal syllables, which can be sung to the vina.[2] May it bring me renown and may no ill be spoken of me on account of this."

With great delight the disciple committed to memory the verse composed by his spiritual preceptor, who expressed his satisfaction at the skill of his pupil Bharadwaja. Bathing in the sacred river, according to the prescribed ritual, the sage returned to his hermitage, pondering over the matter. The humble and learned disciple Bharadwaja followed the great Sage, carrying his loshta filled with water.

On entering the hermitage, the sage worshipped the Lord

[1] Krauncha. Ardea jaculator, a species of heron.
[2] Vina. A musical stringed instrument.

and performed other rituals and having instructed his disciple in the tradition and the sacred history, passed into deep meditation. The Creator of the world, the Self-born, the four-faced and glorious Brahma at length appeared before the holy sage. Valmiki rose hastily, filled with astonishment, and welcoming the Deity in great humility, offered obeisance to Him. Leading Him to a seat, in profound reverence he poured forth libations of water as enjoined in the tradition, making enquiries as to His welfare. The Blessed Lord accepted the homage offered to Him and commanded the sage to be seated. Shri Valmiki occupied the place designated by Brahma and once more recollected his grief over the incident of the wicked fowler, who ruthlessly slew the bird that was so happy and cooing with delight. He recalled the grief of the female bird and read and re-read the lines :—

" By the ignorant and wicked fowler, grief is born
For he has wantonly slain the melodious krauncha."

Shri Brahma, seeing the sage afflicted and sorrowful, said to him : " O Great Sage, let these words spontaneously uttered by thee, inspired by the death of the krauncha, be poetry. Do thou describe the whole story of Rama, who is the essence of virtue and full of the highest attributes, in accordance with what thou hast heard from Shri Narada. Do thou narrate all the known and hitherto unknown deeds of Shri Rama, Sita and Lakshmana and the asuras. Whatever relates to King Dasaratha, his wives, city, palace, sayings, conduct and what he accomplished, will be revealed to thee by my favour. None of thy words will prove false. Do thou render into verse the sacred and delightful deeds of Rama. O Sage, as long as the mountains and rivers remain on the earth, so long will the story of Shri Rama endure. So long as the story of Rama endures, so long shalt thou abide in the higher regions."

Having uttered these words, Shri Brahma pondered awhile within Himself and then vanished from sight.

The great sage and his disciple were filled with amazement at this event, and reading the stanza again and again, their delight grew. Repeatedly reciting the couplet, composed by Valmiki, they realised that the holy sage had expressed his sorrow

in poetic form. Then Shri Valmiki meditated on the Lord within his soul and it occurred to him to relate the story of Rama in similar verse. For the good of the world, the illustrious and holy sage, therefore, began composing the life of Shri Rama in verse; that Rama, worthy of world-wide renown, who is both generous and charming. Shri Valmiki composed the story of the life of Rama and of the slaying of Ravana in beautiful and measured stanzas, a work of infinite merit.

CHAPTER 3

The deeds of Rama that will be described in the sacred poem

HAVING heard the story of the life of the sagacious Rama from the lips of Shri Narada which, when recounted, confers perfect righteousness on the hearer, the holy sage wished to know more concerning the sacred theme. Washing his hands and feet and drinking a little pure water, placing himself facing the east on a seat of kusha grass, with joined palms, he passed into profound meditation and in a vision beheld the history of Rama. Through the grace of Shri Brahma, the holy sage saw all that Rama, Sita and Lakshmana had experienced, observed and done. He witnessed in detail the life of Rama, who was truth incarnate and all that he had accomplished in the forest and other places.

By the power of spiritual meditation and yoga, the Sage Valmiki saw the whole past as clearly as if it were a fruit placed on the palm of his hand. Thus, having witnessed all, the most enlightened sage began to describe the life of Shri Rama in verse.

The history of Shri Rama, which confers righteousness, worldly prosperity and delight on the reader, which does not degrade the mind and grants release from sorrow, that story which charms the heart and is as full of lovely gems as is the sea, was rendered by Shri Valmiki, in the form in which Shri Narada had related it to him.

The birth of Rama, his valour, his benevolence to all men, his universal goodwill, his clemency, his pleasing looks, his

sweet disposition, his love of truth, his humility, his helpful services to the Sage Vishwamitra, the instruction given by the Sage Vishwamitra to him and his patient hearing of it; his breaking of the great bow; his marriage to Princess Sita; his controversy with Parasurama; the preparations for his coronation; a description of his great qualities; the opposition offered by Queen Kaikeyi to the coronation; his departure to the forest; the lament and death of King Dasaratha, the grief of the people of Ayodhya; Rama's speech with the ferryman; his farewell to Sumantra; his crossing of the Ganges; his visit to the holy Sage Bharadwaja; his departure for Chittrakuta on the instance of the sage; his dwelling in the leaf-thatched hut on Mount Chittrakuta; the grief of the king on Sumantra's return and the monarch's departure to heaven; the arrival of Shri Bharata at Chittrakuta to persuade Rama to return to his kingdom; his stay at the hermitage; his interview with Rama; the funeral rites of his sire; Rama's refusal to return; the receiving of Rama's sandals by Bharata as a symbol of authority; Bharata's installation of the symbol and his ruling of Ayodhya from Nandigrama; Shri Rama's visit to the Dandaka forest; his slaying of the wicked Virodha;[1] his interview with the Sage Sharabhanga; his arrival at the hermitage of Sutikshna; the meeting of Anasuya with Shri Sita and the imparting of teachings to her; the visit of the Sage Agastya; his residence at Panchavati; the meeting with Jatayu; the appearance of Shurparnakha; the conversation of Rama and Lakshmana with her; Shuparnakha's mutilation; the slaying of Khara, Dusana and Trishira; the arrival of Ravana; the slaying of Maricha; the abduction of Sita; Rama's lament on his separation from Sita; the slaying of Jatayu by Ravana; the meeting with Kabandha; the arrival at Lake Pampa; Rama's interview with Shabari; his arrival at the Rishyamukha mountain; his meeting with Hanuman; Rama's seal of friendship with Sugriva; his promise to destroy Bali; the combat between Bali and Sugriva; the slaying of Bali; the mourning of Tara; the installation of Sugriva; Shri Rama's sojourn on the mountain in the rainy season; Sugriva's exceeding of the stated time for his mission, Rama's anger against him; Lakshmana's delivery of the message

[1] Virodha. A man-eating demon.

to Sugriva ; Sugriva's visit to Rama ; his propitiation of Rama ; the organising of the monkey army ; the dispatch of the monkeys to find Sita's abode ; the description of the earth given to them ; the giving of Rama's ring to Hanuman ; the monkeys entry into the dark cave ; their fasting on the seashore in preparation for death ; their interview with Sampati, the king of the vultures ; his information respecting Lanka ; Hanuman's leap and his crossing of the sea ; the emergence of the Minaka hill from the ocean ; the slaying of the wicked female demon Singhika who imprisoned her victims by capturing their shadow ; the appearance of Lanka by night ; the entry of Hanuman into Lanka and his lonely reflections ; his seeing of the wicked Ravana and his aerial chariot Pushpaka ; Hanuman's entry into the inner apartments, where Ravana is drinking surrounded by women ; Hanuman's search for Sita and his beholding of the princess in the ashoka garden ; Ravana's entry into the garden and his solicitation of Sita ; her reproaches ; the threatening of Sita by the female asuras ; Trijata's description of her dream concerning the delivery of Shri Rama's ring to Sita by Hanuman ; the conversation on this matter ; the gift of the jewel to Hanuman by Sita ; the destruction of the grove by Hanuman ; the flight of the women asuras ; the slaying of Ravana's guards by Hanuman ; the capture of Hanuman and the burning of Lanka by him ; the re-crossing of the sea ; the eating of the fruits of the Madhu forest ; the words of consolation offered to Shri Rama by Hanuman and the delivery of Shri Sita's jewel to him ; the arrival of Shri Rama at the seashore and the bridging of the sea by Nala and Nila ; the siege of Lanka ; the arrival of Ravana's brother Vibishana to take refuge with Shri Rama and the disclosure by him of the design to destroy Ravana ; the slaying of Kumbhakarna and Meghanada ; the destruction of Ravana ; the reunion with Sita ; the crowning of Vibishana, King of Lanka ; the offer of the aerial chariot Pushpaka by Vibishana to Rama ; the return of Shri Rama to Ayodhya ; the reunion with Prince Bharata ; the crowning of Shri Rama as king ; the farewell to the monkey army ; the rejoicings of his subjects at the coronation ; the repudiation of Sita ; these and all the other deeds of Rama on earth have been described in the sacred poem written by the blessed Valmiki himself.

CHAPTER 4

Shri Rama's sons chant the poem

WHILE Shri Rama was still King of Ayodhya, the great Sage Valmiki composed this beautiful classic.

The holy rishi composed twenty-four thousand verses and divided them into five hundred chapters and six books. In addition, he composed the epilogue. The work being completed, he reflected thus: " To whom shall I teach this classic ? "

While the sage was reflecting on the matter, the two princes, Kusha and Lava, the offspring of Rama and Sita approached him and touched his feet in reverence. The great sage studied these two virtuous princes of mellifluous speech, who dwelt with him in his hermitage at that time. Knowing them to be wise and full of faith in the teachings of the Vedas, the great sage, who had expounded the meaning of the scriptures in his verses, taught the classic to them.

The great Valmiki taught them the classic describing the deeds of Rama and Sita and all that relates to the incidents leading to the slaying of Ravana named "The Slaying of the Grandson of Poulastya ".[1] This historical classic is pleasant to sing and adapted to the three measures of time,[2] it is contained within the seven notes and can be sung to the vina. It expresses the various moods of love, courage, disgust, anger, terror, compassion, wonder, laughter and serenity.

The two princes were skilled musicians, proficient in rhythm and melody and had sweet voices; they were as comely to look at as Gandharvas.[3] Endowed with god-like beauty, the two sweet singers, the reflected images of Shri Rama himself, constantly repeated the holy classic and committed it to memory. The two adorable and charming princes skilfully recited the holy classic, the Ramayana, which extols virtue, before the sages, the learned brahmins and the ascetics, as they had been instructed to do.

[1] Poulastya. One of the seven great sages, born from the mind of Brahma, the Creator.
[2] three measures of time—slow, medium, quick.
[3] Gandharvas—celestial musicians.

On a particular occasion, the two princes, great-souled, fortunate, and equipped with all good qualities, chanted the great epic in Shri Rama's assembly. The listening sages were visibly moved and shed tears of delight. Being overcome with wonder, they cried "Excellent! Excellent", and praising the two singers, the virtue-loving sages experienced great joy. Showering praises on the brothers, they cried, "How melodiously you sing! How exquisite is the divine poem, the story of Rama!"

Being pleased with the sweet singers, one sage presented them with loshtas, another with delicious fruits, a third with robes of bark and another with antelope skins; some gave sacrificial thread, some vessels for collecting alms, others gave loin cloths, kusha grass, garments of yellow cloth, scarves and thread for binding the hair, sacrificial vessels, rosaries and axes. Others bestowed their blessings upon them, saying "May you live long" and all acclaimed the author of the marvellous poem.

They said: "This metre will be the foundation of the verse of future poets; it is composed according to specific rules; the two princes have sung this wonderful poem with great art; it will promote wisdom in those who listen to it and grant them longevity and health; it is truly able to charm the heart."

While the sages were thus praising the two princes, Shri Ramachandra, passing that way, took them to his royal palace. Occupying his golden throne, Shri Rama, the destroyer of his foes, offered hospitality and reverence to the two worthy princes. In the assembly, surrounded by his ministers and brothers, Shri Rama looked approvingly on those handsome and learned youths, and addressed the Princes Lakshmana, Shatrughna and Bharata saying: "Hear the historical poem, which these two celestial and brilliant minstrels sing, this poem which portrays incidents of wonderful meaning."

Then Shri Rama commanded the two musicians to sing and the princes tuned their vinas and chanted the poem they had learned, sweetly and clearly. The whole assembly listened to the music which was wholly gratifying to the mind and heart.

Shri Rama said: "I admire the music and the verse sung by these two minstrels who appear to be endowed with royal attributes."

In this way, praised and encouraged by Shri Ramachandra, the two brothers demonstrating their skill in music, sang on. Listening to them in the royal assembly, Shri Ramachandra was charmed.

CHAPTER 5

King Dasaratha's kingdom and capital

THE earth consisting of seven islands has been under one ruler since the time of those kings descended from Manu,[1] who were ever victorious.

Among those mighty monarchs was Sagara followed by his sixty thousand sons who hollowed out the ocean. This classic Ramayana contains the history of the House of Sagara, founded by Ikshwaku. This Rama-Katha[2] will be recited from beginning to end—let all listen to it with faith.

On the banks of the river Sarayu, there was a great and prosperous country named Koshala, inhabited by contented people. In it was the city of Ayodhya, famous in the three worlds, founded by the renowned Manu, a lord among men. The city's thoroughfares extended for sixty miles; its beauty was enhanced by streets admirably planned, the principal highways being sprinkled with water and strewn with flowers.

King Dasaratha protected the city as Maghavan[3] protects Amaravati.[4] He dwelt there in splendour, as Indra in heaven. The city had beautiful and massive gates and charming markets; its fortifications were planned by skilful engineers and artificers. There were bards, ballad singers and public musicians in the city; the inhabitants were wealthy and had spacious houses with high arched porticos, decorated with flags and banners. It was filled with extensive buildings and beautiful gardens,

[1] Manu from the root "man", "to think". The progenitor of mankind, created by Brahma.
[2] Rama-katha. The recitation of Ramayana.
[3] Maghavan. A title of the Lord Indra, King of the Celestials.
[4] Amaravati. Lord Indra's capital.

and surrounded by mango groves, tall trees enhancing the outskirts of the city, giving it the appearance of a beautiful girl wearing a girdle of greenery. The city was enclosed by strong fortifications and a deep moat which no enemy, by any expedient whatsoever, could penetrate. Countless elephants, horses, cattle, camels and mules were to be seen in the city. Innumerable ambassadors and merchants dwelt there and people from many lands traded peacefully within its walls.

Ayodhya, like Indra's Amaravati, was resplendent with gilded palaces, the walls of which were set with precious stones, the domes resembling mountain peaks. Gem-encrusted, sky-kissing buildings could be seen throughout the royal capital. Dwelling houses, tall and fair, stood in well-placed sites and resounded with delightful music. There were lovely dwellings occupied by men of noble birth, resembling the aerial chariots that carry those of pure life and spiritual perfection to heaven.

The warriors living in that city were of those who do not slay a fleeing foe, they were skilled archers, able to pierce a target by sound alone. Many had slain tigers, lions and wolves wandering near their homes, either in single combat or with different kinds of weapons. This great city which harboured thousands of chieftains was built[1] by King Dasaratha.

In Ayodhya lived countless learned men engaged in the observance of rituals, there were also artists and craftsmen, men deeply read in the Veda and those endowed with every virtue, full of truth and wisdom, as well as thousands of seers and sages versed in the mystical science of Yoga.

CHAPTER 6

The city of Ayodhya

THERE dwelt in that city, King Dasaratha, a follower of the tradition of the illustrious Emperor Manu. The king was learned in the interpretation of the Vedas, his chief wealth was

[1] It is implied that Manu founded the original city on this site, but several cities built by other monarchs succeeded it.

pre-eminence in truth and virtue; he was one who never broke his word, who was ever prudent, majestic and beloved of his subjects, a great charioteer, a worthy descendant of the dynasty of Ikshwaku, an observer of many sacrifices, one who ever delighted in the practice of righteousness; in full authority over his people, equal to a great sage; a royal seer, renowned in the three worlds, triumphing over his enemies, a friend to all; having perfect control of his senses and appetites; in prosperity equal to Indra; in wealth equal to Kuvera.

That truth-loving monarch, striving to acquire perfection in virtue, worldly prosperity and happiness, ruled the city as the celestial monarch Indra rules Amaravati.

The people in that city were happy, virtuous, learned, experienced, each satisfied with his state, practising his own calling, without avarice and of truthful speech. None was indigent or dwelt in a mean habitation; all lived happily with their families, possessing wealth, grain, cattle and horses. In that city of Ayodhya, none was a miser or a swindler, none was mean-spirited, proud, rash, worthless or an atheist. Men and women were of righteous conduct, fully self-controlled, and in their pure and chaste behaviour they equalled the great sages. None lacked earrings, coronets and necklaces. They bathed daily and rubbed their bodies with oil, using attar of roses and sandal paste. None ate impure food, none allowed his neighbour to suffer hunger. All possessed ornaments and gold, and there was none who had not learnt to subdue his mind. No one in the city neglected to offer butter and fragrant objects in the sacrificial fire. No one was mean, impious or failed to discharge his duties; there were no thieves and none were born of mixed castes.

The brahmins were devoted to their respective duties, firm in self-control and authorized to accept gifts. None denied the existence of God, none uttered falsehood or were enamoured of worldly pleasure and none was guilty of slander. No brahmin was unversed in the six systems of philosophy nor did any neglect to fast at the full moon, or on other appointed days; there were none who suffered from mental or physical infirmities and none were unhappy in that city.

Among the inhabitants, there were no revolutionaries and none who were not loyal to king and state. Those who dwelt

there, worshipped the gods and the uninvited guest; they were both magnanimous and charitable.

All attained a ripe age as virtuous and truth-loving people; their homes were filled with children, grandchildren and virtuous women. The warriors were subject to the learned brahmins and the merchants to the warrior caste; in accordance with their caste the people served the brahmins, the warriors and the merchants.

In the administration of the empire, the Emperor Dasaratha followed the example of the first ruler Manu who was supreme in wisdom and a god among men.

Ayodhya abounded in warriors, undefeated in battle, fearless and skilful in the use of arms, resembling lions guarding their mountain caves.

There were horses in the city from Kamroja, Vanaya, Nudi and Vahli, and elephants from the regions of Vindhu and Himavat.

The city of Ayodhya was full of courageous and noble men belonging to the races of Bhadra, Mulla and Mriga, inhabitants of the regions of Binchyachala and the Himalayan ranges.

The city possessed mighty elephants like great hills. That capital was truly worthy of the name 'Ayodhya,' which means "The city none can challenge in warfare".

Dwelling there, the Emperor Dasaratha, ruling the kingdom, resembled the moon in the midst of countless stars. That great king, equal to Indra himself, reigned over the city, guarded by fortifications and ramparts, a city which contained innumerable dwellings of many kinds and thousands of prosperous inhabitants.

CHAPTER 7

The administration of the kingdom

Ever devoted to the welfare of King Dasaratha, the ministers of the House of Ikshwaku were possessed of all the virtues; their counsels were based on truth and they understood the import of the royal commands immediately.

Eight of the king's counsellors were famed; untiringly employed in the affairs of state, they were honest and devoted to the cultivation of virtue. Their names were Dhristi, Jayanta, Vijaja, Siddhartha, Atyartha-Sadaka, Ashoka, Mantra-pala and Sumantra.

The great and holy sages, Vasishtha and Vamadeva assisted the king in his observance of spiritual duties and also acted as his advisers.

All the ministers were virtuous, scorning to do wrong, benevolent, versed in the moral law, of wide experience, disinterested, magnanimous, acquainted with the spirit of the scriptures, forbearing, patient, obedient to the king, true to their word, cheerful, free from avarice and well acquainted with the affairs of their fellow subjects and with those of the subjects of other monarchs. They were efficient, firm in friendship, and even passed judgment on their own sons if they broke the law.

These counsellors were expert in the science of economics and warfare, and never inflicted unmerited punishment on an enemy. They were brave and unambitious. Conversant with every branch of political life, they protected all those who lived in the state. Adding to the royal treasury without burdening the learned and the warriors, they inflicted penalties on wrongdoers with due regard to their capacity for bearing it. These ministers were pure of heart and of chaste conduct. None consorted with his neighbour's wife, none were wicked and all lived together peaceably. Cultivating every good quality and practising the various arts, they were renowned for their courage, their fair name was published abroad and their lives were guided by reason. Skilled in the laws of the country and blessed with wealth, they issued wise edicts and exercised their minds in philosophical debate.

Acquainted with the moral code, they conversed affectionately with each other; such were King Dasaratha's ministers who, informed by their agents of the needs of the people, satisfied them and governed with prudence.

In the administration of his kingdom, the king never permitted unrighteousness to cause dissension, and became known throughout the world as an ocean of truth. That lion among men

King Dasaratha, reigning over the earth, had none superior or equal to himself. Honoured by his feudal lords, surrounded by friends, King Dasaratha, like Indra, reigned in majesty.

Benevolent, powerful, accomplished and gracious, King Dasaratha protected Ayodhya and shone in splendour like the sun illumining the world.

CHAPTER 8

The king desires to perform a sacrifice for the birth of a son

KING DASARATHA, that glorious and righteous king, though performing great austerities, was without an heir to the throne. Then the wise and great-souled monarch said to himself: "I will perform the horse-sacrifice (Aswa-medha)[1] in order to have a son."

Having thus decided, the supremely sagacious sovereign convened a meeting of his counsellors and addressing his chief minister, Sumantra, commanded him as follows: "Send speedily for the spiritual preceptors and priests." Quick to act, Sumantra at once summoned those highly learned preceptors and brought thither Suyagna, Vamadeva, Javali, Kasyapa and Vasishtha together with other eminent priests and *brahmins*.

Having offered salutations to these holy men, King Dasaratha, speaking in gracious accents, uttered words full of truth and purpose: He said, "O Sages, I have practised virtue and yet I have not had the good fortune to be blessed with a son; it is therefore my intention to perform the horse-sacrifice. I wish to act according to the injunction of the scriptures; you, O Holy Men, advise me after due deliberation as to how I can be successful in the proposed undertaking".

[1] Aswa-Medha. A sacrifice, which in Vedic times was performed by kings. A horse, being consecrated by certain ceremonies, was let loose and allowed to wander at will followed by warriors; the ruler of any country the animal entered was bound to fight or submit; finally the horse was sacrificed with special rites.

The learned brahmins, led by Shri Vasishtha, praised the king's intention and said: "Thou hast decided on the proper course, O King." Highly pleased, they commanded those things requisite for the sacrifice to be assembled and the horse loosed. They said, "O King, let a place of sacrifice be chosen on the north bank of the river Sarayu. O King, this holy resolve formed by thee, for the sake of an heir, will assuredly bring the fulfilment of thy desire".

Hearing the words of the brahmins, the monarch rejoiced and commanded his ministers to bring the sacrificial appointments and release the horse under the protection of the warriors;[1] they were also directed to erect a sacrificial pavilion on the bank of the river Sarayu. He further decreed the adoption of those measures which would diminish the possibility of hindrance to the sacrifice, for even for kings, the horse-sacrifice was not easily performed.

The king said: "Let it be remembered that during the observance of the sacrifice, no suffering must be inflicted on any, lest some perverse and crafty brahmin should cause obstruction in the proceedings. By carrying through the ritual without regard for scriptural injunctions, it comes to nought; therefore, bring the sacrifice to a successful conclusion. I depend on you, and expect you to carry the sacrifice through to a successful issue."

The counsellors replied, saying, "O King, be it so".

Blessing the monarch, the learned brahmins retired, and the king addressed his ministers saying: "Prepare the sacrifice as the officiating priests have instructed you and accept responsibility for its final success."

Then the illustrious sovereign left the court and entered his private apartments where the queens dwelt, who loved the king from the depths of their hearts.

King Dasaratha addressed them, saying: "I intend to observe a sacrifice for the sake of obtaining a son, do you all follow the prescribed discipline." The queens rejoiced to hear these words from the lips of the king and their lotus-like faces brightened like flowers on the departure of the cold season.

[1] See note on page 22.

CHAPTER 9

Sumantra relates a tradition that a son will be born through the help of the Sage Rishyasringa

SUMANTRA, having heard of the preparations for the sacrifice, obtained a private audience with his sovereign and said: " I have heard of a tradition, formerly related to me by the august brahmins. O King, in ancient days, the blessed Sanatkumara predicted to the holy sages around him that a son would be born to thee.

It was prophesied that a son of Kasyapa, named Vibhandaka would have a son called Rishyasringa and that he should dwell in the forest alone with his saintly father, unknown to any other man or woman.

This sage would keep the twofold vow of brahmacharya enjoined by the sages. In this way he would pass a long time worshipping God through the fire-sacrifice and the service of his sire.

In the country named Anga, a famous king named Lomapada, would oppress the people by his evil way of life and thus cause a drought. On account of this, the king would suffer great affliction and summoning the brahmins would say to them: " O Wise Men, acquainted as you are with the customs of the world and also the divine laws, tell me what ritual of purification and repentance I can adopt to expiate my evil deeds, which have brought about this drought."

Then the brahmins, learned in the Veda, would answer the king thus: " O King, exert thyself by every means to bring the son of the Sage Vibhandaka hither. Having with due reverence conveyed him hither, do thou confer thy daughter Shanta on him in marriage."

The king having listened to their words and reflected on how he should bring that excellent sage to the court, would then request his ministers and priests to approach the sage, but they would declare their unwillingness to undertake the mission, being afraid of the rishi's power.

In order to avoid the monarch's displeasure, however, after

deliberating on the method by which the sage could be brought to the court, they would make the following proposal: " By the courtesans can the sage be persuaded to come to the king's court, the rains will then follow and the drought will be at an end. Then will the king join his daughter in marriage to the sage. By pouring oblations into the sacrificial fire the illustrious sage, Rishyasringa, will, by his grace, obtain the desired son for King Dasaratha."

" Thus spoke the illustrious Sanatkumara, in the midst of the sages, and I have now recounted it to thee."

King Dasaratha was delighted to hear these words, and requested the minister to describe further how King Lomapada brought the sage to his court.

CHAPTER 10

He describes how Rishyasringa was brought to King Lomapada's court

THUS requested, Sumantra began to narrate the story in detail and said: " O Great King, hear how the ministers brought the Sage Rishyasringa to the court.

" The ministers addressed King Lomapada saying: ' We have a plan whereby the young sage may be conveyed hither successfully. He resides in the forest, devoted to holy study, spiritual practices and asceticism, and is wholly unacquainted with the pursuit of pleasure.

" ' By the means of those things gratifying to the senses, we shall most certainly be able to bring the sage to the court. Let beautifully-attired and lovely courtesans go there and by their acts, charm and bring him hither '."

The king approved the plan and commanded his ministers to carry it out.

The courtesans then entered the forest and took up their abode near the hermitage, seeking a meeting with the young sage. Protected by his father, the youthful ascetic seldom

passed the boundaries of the hermitage, nor had he seen any man or woman beyond its precincts.

One day, impelled by destiny, the youth went forth from the hermitage and beheld the graceful and beautiful women, attired in many-coloured robes of exquisite design, singing sweetly. They approached the son of Rishi Vibhandaka and addressed him, saying: "Who art thou? Whose son art thou? What is thy name? Why dost thou dwell in the dark forest?"

Never having beheld women of beauty and charm before, Rishyasringa was captivated and answered them, saying: "My father is the great Sage Vibhandaka of the family of Kasyapa and I am his son, my name is Rishyasringa. O Beautiful Beings of charming mien, my hermitage is near at hand, please come thither and allow me to offer you hospitality there."

The courtesans accepted the invitation and accompanied the sage who received them in the traditional manner, placing before them water to wash their feet and delicious roots and fruits.

Fearing the father's return and anxious to depart with all haste, the courtesans plied the young sage with tasty confections which they had brought with them, saying: "Be pleased to accept these dainties which we have brought for thee to enjoy on this occasion." They then caressed the youth, feeding him with sweets and other delicacies.

The resplendent sage partook of the offerings, thinking them to be fruits, never having tasted any other food.

The courtesans, fearing the father's return, pretended to be fasting and left the hermitage. At their departure, the youthful sage felt dejected and restless.

The following day, the courtesans, charmingly attired, again went to the hermitage and smiled on perceiving the young sage appear so disconsolate. They then approached him and said: "O Handsome Youth, to-day please grace our hermitage with thy presence. O Auspicious One, we can entertain thee better there than here."

The young sage agreed to accompany them and went with them to their abode. As the sage entered the city, Indra showered rain on the domain of King Lomapada and the people rejoiced.

When the rain began to fall, King Lomapada, realising that the holy sage had entered the city, went out to meet him. Offering him humble and loving salutations, he presented him with the traditional gifts (arghya)[1] of water and food, and entreated him to grant the boon that his father Vibhandaka should not visit his displeasure on him.

The king then took the youth to the inner apartments and united him in marriage to his daughter Shanta.

Deeply revered by the king, Rishyasringa lived happily in the capital with his bride, the Princess Shanta.

CHAPTER II

King Dasaratha goes to King Lomapada, by whose permission Rishyasringa comes to Ayodhya

SUMANTRA said: " O Great King, hearken further to the words of the great Sage Sanatkumara :—

" ' In the House of Ikshwaku, there will be a highly righteous and truth-loving king named Dasaratha who will form an alliance with King Lomapada of Anga.

" ' King Dasaratha will approach his friend Lomapada and beg the assistance of Rishyasringa, the husband of the Princess Shanta, in the performance of the sacrifice he desires to observe, that he may be blessed with a son. After mature consideration, King Lomapada will permit Shanta's lord, Rishyasringa to accompany King Dasaratha. Highly gratified, King Dasaratha will return to his capital with Rishyasringa and will ask the sage to officiate at the sacrifice he is about to perform in order to obtain sons and also a future abode in the celestial regions.

" 'As a result of the sacrifice, King Dasaratha will have four sons, each of limitless valour. These sons will be renowned throughout the world and will increase the glory of their dynasty.'

[1] Arghya. A ceremonial offering of water, milk and kusha grass, rice, durva, sandalwood, flowers, etc.

"This story was narrated by the Sage Sanatkumara in the first quarter of Satya-Yuga.[1] O Great King! Thou shouldst approach Rishyasringa with a worthy chariot and retinue, and bring him with ceremony to thy capital."

Having heard the good counsel of his minister Sumantra, the King commanded him to inform his Guru Vasishtha of this matter, and the holy Vasishtha acquiesced in the plan.

Then the king, with firm resolve, attended by his queens, counsellors and priests, prepared to set forth for the city where Rishyasringa dwelt. Passing through various forests and traversing many rivers, the king arrived at Lomapada's capital. There he beheld the resplendent sage, in lustre like a glowing fire, seated near King Lomapada.

Inspired by friendship, the great monarch Lomapada offered respectful salutations to King Dasaratha and informed Rishyasringa of his alliance with this king, whereupon the sage expressed his approval in words of praise.

Having enjoyed the hospitality of King Lomapada for seven days, King Dasaratha addressed him thus: "O King, I desire to enter upon an important undertaking, be gracious enough to allow thy daughter Shanta and her lord to return to my capital to assist me."

Hearing these words, King Lomapada replied: "Be it so," and turning to the sage said: "Be pleased to go with thy wife to the capital of King Dasaratha."

The youthful sage assented to the command of King Lomapada, and he, in company with his spouse, departed with King Dasaratha.

Having taken leave of his friend, King Dasaratha despatched speedy messengers to go before him to instruct his ministers to prepare for their arrival.

The people of Ayodhya carried out all as they had been commanded and overjoyed at the monarch's return, fulfilled the instructions of his messengers. The citizens were delighted to behold the young sage entering the city and being honoured by the king, as Indra in heaven pays tribute to Kasyapa.

Having introduced the sage and his consort to the inner

[1] Satya-Yuga—the Golden Age. There are four yugas in the world cycle—Satya or Krita, Treta, Dwapara and Kali, the golden, silver, copper, and iron age.

apartments, the king offered him the traditional welcome as enjoined in the scriptures.

The royal ladies also welcomed the wide-eyed Shanta with her lord to the private apartments, and expressed their pleasure and delight.

Honoured and worshipped by the queens, no less than by King Dasaratha himself, the Princess Shanta and her husband, the sage, dwelt in the palace as Brihaspati[1] resides in the city of Mahendra.

CHAPTER 12

Rishyasringa agrees to assist in the sacrifice

TIME passed and the spring came again while the holy sage was at the court of King Dasaratha. On a propitious day, the king decided to enter upon the sacrifice.

He approached Rishyasringa and, bowing low, offered salutations to him, inviting that god-like sage to assist in the sacrifice he was observing, to preserve the dynasty. The sage agreed and requested the king to provide the necessary material for the sacrifice and to let loose the horse.

The sovereign commanded his minister Sumantra to summon with all speed the priests acquainted with the philosophy of the Veda, and sent invitations to the sages Vamadeva, Javali, Kasyapa, the high priest Vasishtha and other exalted and learned brahmins.

Sumantra, setting out in haste, approached the sages courteously and brought them to the king. The virtuous monarch, after paying respectful homage to them, addressed them humbly, speaking words full of candour and integrity.

He said : " O Sages, despite my ardent desire to have an heir, I am without one. I have, therefore, decided to perform the horse sacrifice to that end. I desire the sacrifice to be observed according to the scriptural laws and through the grace of the Sage Rishyasringa, I hope to attain my purpose."

[1] Brihaspati. The Guru of the gods, also the regent of the planet Jupiter.

The sages advised the king to gather together the sacrificial articles and to release the horse.

They said: "Righteous is thy desire to be blessed with a son; O King, thou shalt surely obtain four illustrious sons of limitless valour."

The brahmins' words convinced the king that heirs would be granted to him and he communicated his satisfaction to his ministers. He said: "O Counsellors, bring together four high priests and set the horse at liberty under the protection of four hundred warriors. Let a sacrificial pavilion be set up on the bank of the river Sarayu, and let appropriate protective rites be observed lest obstructions arise."

The king then ordained that during the period of sacrifice neither priests nor other persons should be subject to any suffering whatsoever. He said: "In such rites, others have been impeded by sub-human beings, which has resulted in the annulment of the sacrifice. You should, therefore, employ every means to bring the sacrifice to a successful conclusion."

Hearing the words of the king, the ministers—highly gratified—began to act according to his instructions. Then the brahmins assured the king that the sacrifice would be accomplished without hindrance and offering him obeisance, returned to their homes.

The brahmins having departed, the king bade farewell to his ministers and entered his private apartments.

CHAPTER 13

The Sacrifice is commenced

THE following year, spring having returned once more, the king, desiring to complete the sacrifice for the sake of an heir, paid homage to Shri Vasishtha, offering him humble salutations according to the prescribed ordinance, and addressed that great brahmin with submission, saying:—

" O Great Sage, be pleased to complete the holy ceremony according to the sacred tradition. Let it be so undertaken that no interference may take place. Thou art compassionate and thy heart is inclined towards me. Thou art also my Guru, the burden of the sacrifice must be borne by thee."

The most excellent sage replied, " Be it so. I will do as thou desirest."

Hereafter, Shri Vasishtha summoned those brahmins, able to perform the holy rituals and also artificers, architects, writers, actors and dancers.

Addressing the learned priests, he said: "At the king's command, inaugurate the great sacrifice. Cause bricks in thousands to be brought hither with all speed and erect many kinds of dwellings, well arranged, furnished with food and every comfort to accommodate royal and other guests. Prepare hundreds of beautiful houses on suitable sites, together with provisions and all things needed by brahmins; erect also large buildings for the people of other lands, and store food and articles of comfort where it is best to do so. Fine and well-equipped houses should be built for villagers. Ensure that hospitality in the form of food and refreshment be given with courtesy and kindness. Those attending the sacrifice should be entertained with respect and consideration, being received in a becoming manner, according to their caste. Let no affront be offered to any through greed, anger or lust. Let craftsmen and servants be suitably regarded, so that their hearts be set on their task and let no one act disruptively. Treat all in a spirit of goodwill and courtesy, so that the work may be successfully accomplished."

The people listened to the holy sage and answered, " We will act according to thy instructions, O Sage, nothing shall be omitted."

Shri Vasishtha then summoned the chief minister Sumantra and said: " Send out invitations to the sacrifice to all the righteous kings of the earth and also the brahmins, kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras of every country, but go first to the great Sovereign of Mithila, the heroic Janaka, eminent in truth, the greatest of warriors and a knower of the Veda, since he is an ancient ally of King Dasaratha. Thereafter, bring the ever-

truthful King of Kashi, of exemplary conduct, equal to a god; and then the aged and virtuous King of Kaikeya, our sovereign's father-in-law, and invite his son also. Call the fortunate King Lomapada of Anga, the intimate friend of the King, and bring hither, with respect, Koshala, the King of Magadha.

"Thereafter, send messengers to the kings of the eastern countries of Sindhu, Souriva, and Sourashtra, and the monarchs of the south, with other great kings of the earth; let them come with their brothers, relations, retainers and servants."

Having heard the words of Shri Vasishtha, Sumantra carried out the instructions given by him, dispatching invitations by special messengers to the monarchs of many lands, himself going forth to escort some of the great kings.

Sumantra having departed, all the workers employed in the sacrifice informed the holy sage of their progress, and he advised them further saying: "Let nothing be presented to any without due respect, even in jest; gifts given with contempt lead to the destruction of the giver."

A few days later, the kings from afar arrived at the sacrificial pavilion bearing gifts of gems.

Then Shri Vasishtha, being pleased, said: "O King, at thy command, all the kings have come and been received by me with due hospitality. The preparations for the sacrifice are now completed, be pleased to enter the sacrificial pavilion and inspect the articles needed for the ceremony. See how well thy servants have furnished everything requisite and have gratified thy every wish."

On the recommendation of the Sage Vasishtha and Rishyasringa, King Dasaratha went to the sacrificial ground at an auspicious time, when a propitious star was in the ascendant. Then the learned brahmins and Shri Vasishtha elected Rishyasringa as chief priest.

The sacrifice began in accordance with the ancient ordinance and the king, with his queens, engaged in the preliminary initiations.

CHAPTER 14

The Ceremonies are performed with the appropriate rites

HAVING ranged far and wide during a year, the horse returned and on the bank of the river Sarayu the sacrifice of King Dasaratha continued. The chief priests, under Rishyasringa, assisted the king in the observance of the rituals. Brahmins learned in the ancient science, also officiated and assisted the king according to the instructions laid down in the Kalpa Sutra.

The two special portions of the sacrifice *Pravargya* and *Upasada* were duly observed ; then the brahmins worshipped the gods with joy. The illustrious sage performed certain rituals and offered Indra the part of the sacrifice due to him. Thereafter all partook of the soma-juice which destroys every sin.

The high-souled king duly undertook the third portion of the ceremony with the assistance of the holy brahmins. In the sacrifice, no oblation was omitted and none wrongly offered in the sacred fire. All that was done was correctly carried out under the supervision of the sages.

During the period of sacrifice, no brahmin experienced hunger or thirst. Countless priests were present and each was attended by hundreds of disciples. Workers, servants and other classes were feasted like the brahmins, and monks and ascetics were provided for abundantly.

The aged, the children, and the women were served with all they cared to eat, and those who attended on them were willing and pleasant.

By the king's command, apparel, money and other gifts were freely distributed with immeasurable generosity. Mountains of cooked and uncooked foods were to be seen and each could have what he required, to suit his needs. Men and women from many lands were daily entertained with food and drink. From every side, the king heard the exclamations "How delicious is the food, we are well content ".

Servants and retainers gorgeously clad and wearing golden earrings, attended on the brahmins, while others adorned with jewels served other castes.

In the interval between the two parts of the sacrifice, eloquent and learned pundits debated metaphysical problems and vied with each other in the display of wisdom and acumen.

Day by day, the sacrificial ceremonies were carried out by learned and holy priests. There were none assisting at the holy ritual who were illiterate or unacquainted with the Vedas.

Each attendant of the king was inspired by exalted principles and all were highly eloquent and deeply versed in the scriptures.

Eighteen pillars of wood were set up in the place of sacrifice, each made of a different kind of timber. Priests, skilled in the art of sacrificial rites, overlaid them with gold. Each of the eighteen columns was twenty-one feet in height, polished and of octangular shape and all were firmly fixed in the earth and covered with embroidered cloths. In addition, they were adorned with sandalwood and flowers and looked as beautiful as the constellation of the seven sages,[1] in the sky. Sacrificial pits were constructed by master masons and the fire kindled by brahmins.

The sacrificial pit prepared for King Dasaratha was formed like a great eagle in gold, its wings set with gems.

The beasts to be sacrificed to each particular deity were bound according to scriptural injunction. There were birds, snakes and horses, and according to tradition, the chief priest bound the aquatic animals, such as turtles, in the sacrificial pavilion. Three hundred beasts and the horse which had roamed over the earth were assembled.

Queen Kaushalya joyfully paid reverence to the horse before making the sacrifice with three strokes of the sword. Prompted by righteous desire, Queen Kaushalya passed the night watching over the dead body of the horse, then the priests caused the king's serving women and the courtesans to approach it.

The twice-born of subdued senses cooked the fat of the horse on the fire in the manner prescribed by the shastra. King Dasaratha inhaling the odour emitted by the fat, acknowledged and expiated his sins. Sixteen assistant priests made offerings of parts of the horse into the fire, in spoons fashioned of cane, plaksha wood being used in other sacrifices. At the horse

[1] The Plough, each star of which is said to be presided over by one of the immortal sages.

sacrifice, three days of special rituals are observed: during the first day the *Agnistona* is performed; during the second day, the *Uktha* rite, during the third day the *Atiratra* rite. The great sacrificial acts named *Jyotishtoma, Agnishtona, Atiratas, Abhijit, Vishnajit* and *Aptoryama* are also observed.

King Dasaratha, the promoter of his dynasty, on the conclusion of the sacrifice, gave away four parts of his kingdom, as dakshina[1] to the four priests. The king distributed alms following the great example of Swayambhumanu of old. The sacrifice being concluded, that great monarch gave large portions of the earth in charity, to the officiating priests, and finally that magnanimous sovereign bestowed the whole kingdom on the assisting priests.

Then the holy brahmins addressed that sinless monarch, saying: " O Lord of Men, we are not able to protect, defend and administer this vast empire, for we have dedicated ourselves to holy study. Therefore, O Great King, we render back these lands to thee, grant us in return some lesser gift, be it gems, gold or coins to help us in our hermitages."

Thus addressed by the learned brahmins, the king bestowed on them a hundred million pieces of gold, and four hundred million silver coins. Then the assisting priests placed all the king's gifts before the holy sages, Vasishtha and Rishyasringa and begged them to distribute them.

Each one received his just share and the priests were highly pleased and well satisfied. The king gave away gold coins to those who had come to witness the sacrifice and ten million gold coins were bestowed on other brahmins present at that time. A needy mendicant begged for the diamond studded bracelet worn by the king himself and it was freely bestowed on him.

Beholding the brahmins fully satisfied, King Dasaratha with great gladness made obeisance to them again and again.

The twice-born then bestowed their blessings on the king who was exceedingly liberal and valorous and who saluted them by prostrating himself on the earth.

Thus ended the great sacrifice, the means of destroying sin and attaining heaven and scarcely to be accomplished by other monarchs.

[1] Dakshina. Gifts of charity given at the conclusion of a ceremony.

Then the king addressed Rishyasringa and said: "O Thou of great and virtuous resolve, tell me what further must be done by me to be blessed with an heir?"

The Sage Rishyasringa replied: "O King, thou shalt be blessed with four sons, who will perpetuate the royal line."

CHAPTER 15

To destroy Ravana, Shri Vishnu resolves to incarnate

THE wise Rishyasringa, versed in the Scriptures, meditated for a while and then spoke to King Dasaratha saying:—

"O King, I will perform the sacrifice Puttatresti,[1] spoken of in the Atharva Veda, which will assist thee in thy endeavour to obtain a son."

Then the sage inaugurated the sacrifice and poured oblations into the sacred fire accompanied by the chant of Vedic mantras.

The celestial beings, gandharvas, siddhas[2] and sages assembled to obtain their portion of the sacrifice. After the sacrifice, they all approached Shri Brahma, the Lord of mankind and with joined palms addressed him:—

They said: "O Blessed Lord, having been favoured by thee, the Asura Ravana, perpetually troubles us who are helpless, since thou hast granted great boons to him and we are forced to bear his fearful oppression.

"This Lord of Rakshasas has persecuted the three worlds and having overthrown the guardians of the earth, he has even humbled Indra himself. Provoking the sages, contemplatives, brahmins and the gods, he even controls the sun's rays and the wind's power, even the ocean in his presence is still. At his approach, O Blessed Lord, we are terrified. O Giver of Boons, be pleased to bring about his destruction."

Hearing these words, Brahma reflected for a while and

[1] Puttatresti. The sacrifice to extend the race by having sons.

[2] Siddhas. Semi-divine beings that dwell in the region between the earth and the sun.

answered: "I have devised a plan for slaying this wicked tyrant. It was granted to Ravana that no gandharva, yaksha or deva should be able to slay him, but thinking man to be of no account, he did not ask to be made invulnerable in regard to him; therefore, none but man can destroy him."

These words, uttered by Shri Brahma filled the celestial and other beings with joy.

At this time the immortal Vishnu, with conch, disc and mace, the Overlord of the whole world, clad in a yellow robe, appeared at that place. Adored by the gods, he drew near and took his seat by Shri Brahma, then all the gods addressed him saying:—

"O Madhusudana[1], for the good of all beings, we entreat Thee, to be born as heir to the supremely righteous, charitable and illustrious Sage Dasaratha. Appear, O Lord, in the form of four sons to the three consorts of that great king. Descending into a human body, do thou slay Ravana, the scourge of the universe, whom we are unable to destroy. That ignorant Ravana, by his power, afflicts the devas, siddhas and sages. O Lord, that wicked asura, sporting in the garden of Indra, has slain countless nymphs and gandharvas. In company with the sages, we approach Thee so that we may be released from this oppression. We take refuge in Thee, Thou art our only asylum! O Lord, we beseech Thee to take birth as man in order to destroy the enemy of men and gods."

Thus did the gods appeal to Shri Vishnu and He, adored by the world, answered them who had taken refuge in Him:—

"O Devas, fear no more, peace be with you. For your sake, I will destroy Ravana, together with his sons, grandsons, counsellors, friends and relatives. Having slain that cruel and wicked asura, the cause of fear to the divine sages, I will rule in the world of mortals for eleven thousand years."

Thus did Shri Vishnu grant a boon to the gods, and then reflected as to where on the earth he should take birth as man.

Then the lotus-eyed Lord resolved to become incarnate as the four sons of King Dasaratha.

The celestial sages, the heavenly musicians and the nymphs

[1] Madhusudana. Slayer of Madhu. (A demon.)

praised the Lord saying: "O Universal Sovereign, destroy the wicked asura, who is arrogant, powerful and vain, the enemy of Indra and the scourge of the ascetics and pious men, one who strikes terror into every heart, causing universal lamentation.

"Destroy, O Lord, this mighty being, together with his army, generals, relatives, friends and followers, remove the cause of the world's woe and then return to thy perfect abode."

CHAPTER 16

He decides to incarnate as the four sons of King Dasaratha

The Omniscient Lord, Shri Narayana,[1] listened to the praise offered by the gods and honouring them, uttered words of pleasing import to them.

He said: "O Devas, by what means may the King of the Asuras be slain, that thorn in the side of holy men?"

The gods with one accord answered the imperishable Lord, crying: "Do Thou become incarnate in the form of man and slay him in open fight. O Conqueror of Thy foes, Ravana has long practised austerities, by means of which he has won the favour of the world-revered Brahma. That deity has granted him a boon, by which he is rendered invulnerable to all but man. Considering man of no account, he does not fear him. The boon bestowed on him by Shri Brahma has made him arrogant and he is bringing destruction to the three worlds and carrying off women by violence. Therefore, O Lord, man alone can bring about his death."

Hearing the words of the gods, Shri Vishnu resolved to choose King Dasaratha as his sire.

At that time, the illustrious King Dasaratha, the slayer of his foes, began to observe the sacrifice in order to obtain an heir. Shri Vishnu, having formed his resolution to appear in human form and concluded his deliberations with Shri Brahma, vanished.

[1] Narayana. A name of Shri Vishnu, "He whose abode is the water".

Forthwith there issued from King Dasaratha's sacrificial fire to the sound resembling the beating of a drum, a great Being of limitless splendour, of glowing countenance, clad in red and hairy as a lion. Bearing auspicious marks and adorned with beautiful ornaments, his height was equal to the peak of a mountain. Striding boldly like a lion, his form shone as fire. In both hands he carried, as would a beloved spouse, a vessel of gold, with a silver cover, filled with payasa.[1]

This great Being addressed the king saying: "O King, I come from Prajapati.[2] The king bowing down with joined palms, answered: "Thou art welcome, O Lord, what orders hast thou for me?"

Then the Being replied: "Receive the fruit of thy sacrifice! O Chief of Men, accept this dish of payasa prepared by the gods, it will bring thee sons and increase thy power. Let it be eaten by thy consorts, they will then present thee with the heirs for whose sake thou hast performed the sacrifice."

The king received the food contained in the golden vessel prepared by the gods and reverently raised it to his forehead. Having received the divine repast, he rejoiced as a penniless man on obtaining wealth.

Forthwith that wonderful and resplendent being vanished, having offered the consecrated food to the king.

The tidings of this great event caused the consorts of King Dasaratha extreme delight and they appeared as radiant as the beams of the moon irradiating the autumnal sky.

Entering the private apartments, the king addressed Queen Kaushalya, saying: "Receive this food and partake of it that thou mayest have a son."

Thereafter, the monarch gave half of the dish to Queen Kaushalya and one-third to Queen Sumitra. Then he gave the eighth of the payasa to Queen Kaikeyi and, after reflection, the remainder to Queen Sumitra. In this way, the King divided the dish of payasa among his three queens.

On partaking of the food, the beautiful queens were overjoyed and considered themselves most fortunate.

Having consumed the payasa presented to them by the king,

[1] Payasa. A special preparation of rice in milk.
[2] Prajapati. A name of Brahma, the Creator.

the queens soon became pregnant, their wombs glowing like the fire in the sun.

The illustrious sovereign perceiving that the wombs of his consorts were quickened and that his great desire was about to be fulfilled, was filled with supreme joy, as is Shri Vishnu when worshipped by the gods and perfect beings in the celestial region.

CHAPTER 17

To assist Shri Vishnu, celestial beings incarnate as warriors of the monkey tribe

SHRI VISHNU having become the sons[1] of King Dasaratha, the divine Brahma thus addressed the gods: " The blessed Lord Vishnu, the Ocean of Truth is engaged in a just undertaking for the good of all, you should therefore support Him by becoming incarnate as great beings in the monkey tribe, skilled in the arts of magic, swift as the wind, conversant with the dictates of virtue, wise and equal in might to the Lord, invincible, endowed with celestial bodies and skilful in the science of warfare. Some among you should assume the forms of nymphs, gandharvas and female ascetics who will give birth to heroes in the monkey tribe.

" In the past, when I yawned, the great bear, by the name of Jambavan, issued from my mouth."

The gods thus instructed by the blessed Lord, caused warriors to be born in the monkey tribe from the wombs of countless celestial beings.

Indra created Bali, the Sun created Sugriva; Brihaspati created the wise Tara, Kuvera begat Gandha-madana,[2] Vishwakarma[3] begat the mighty ape Nala, Agni begat Nila, who was as resplendent as fire and in valour surpassed his father.

[1] Sons. The Lord was partially manifested in all the sons of King Dasaratha.
[2] Gandha-madana. A general of the monkey allies of Rama.
[3] Vishwakarma. The architect of the gods.

The Aswini-Kumaras[1] produced Minda and Dvivida; Varuna[2] begat Suchena; Megha,[3] was the father of Sharabha, the mighty; Pavana[4] begat the warrior called Hanuman, whose body was as hard as a diamond and whose speed equalled an eagle's; he excelled all the other warriors in wisdom and power.

There were thousands of warriors born in the monkey tribe ready to destroy Ravana. All the bears, monkeys and chimpanzees resembled the god that had produced them in characteristics, habits and prowess, and many were of outstanding valour. The female chimpanzees and bears gave birth to great beings of divine nature. They produced hundreds and thousands of healthy progeny. These dwellers of the forest were imposing in form and in strength and fearlessness resembled lions and tigers. All were able to cleave rocks and mountains and fight with their nails and teeth. Skilled in every kind of weapon, they could shake great peaks, uproot the stoutest trees and by their velocity even put the sea god to shame. Able to tear up the earth with their feet and cause the ocean to overflow, they could fly in the air and even seize the clouds.

These beings of the monkey tribe wandered in the woods, making captive the elephants, and by their shouts causing the birds in flight to fall to the ground. Thus were born millions of monkeys, able to assume any form, together with hundreds and thousands of monkey chiefs.

These chiefs begot other brave and powerful beings, some of whom dwelt on the mountains while others inhabited the valleys and forests.

The two brothers, Sugriva, the offspring of Surya,[5] and Bali, the son of Indra, became the leaders of all the monkeys. Others lived under the command of group leaders, such as Nala, Nila and Hanuman. They were as strong as eagles and skilled in every sort of warfare.

Wandering about the forest, they slew lions, tigers and

[1] Aswini-kumaras. Gods, sons of the sun, precursors of the dawn, also the patrons of medicine.
[2] Varuna. The Hindu Neptune.
[3] Megha. The Regent of the clouds.
[4] Pavana. Lord of the winds.
[5] Surya—the sun.

poisonous snakes. The powerful long-armed Bali protected the monkeys, bears and chimpanzees by his prowess. These heroes, invincible as mountains and of immense size, born to assist Shri Rama, filled the earth.

CHAPTER 18

King Dasaratha's sons are born and grow to manhood

WHEN the sacrifice of King Dasaratha had been brought to a successful conclusion, the gods, receiving their due portions, returned to their abode.

The king also, having fulfilled the obligations incurred by his initiation, returned to the capital with his queens, servants, army and vehicles.

The royal guests to whom due hospitality had been shown, made obeisance to the Sage Vasishtha and returned to their homes. When they departed, ornaments, apparel and gifts were distributed to their armies who set out for their own cities with joy.

King Dasaratha attended the departure of his guests and then re-entered the capital in a procession preceded by the holy brahmins.

Rishyasringa with his wife Shanta then took leave of the monarch and departed to his own city, King Dasaratha accompanying him for some distance. Then the king, expecting to be blessed with an heir, dwelt happily in Ayodhya.

Six seasons after the completion of the sacrifice, in the twelfth month, on the ninth day of the moon of Chaitramas, the star Punarvasu was in the ascendant, and the planets, the Sun, Mars, Saturn, Jupiter and Venus were exalted, and those signs of the zodiac, such as the Ram, the Fishes, and the Scales in auspicious aspects, the moon and Jupiter being in conjunction at the period called Karka. Then the world-honoured Lord of the World, endowed with divine attributes, Shri Ramachandra was born of the womb of Kaushalya.

The Promoter of the glory of the House of Ikshwaku, the blessed Lord Vishnu was born as a son of Queen Kaushalya. When this child of limitless splendour was born, the queen looked most beautiful, like Aditi of old, favoured by Indra.

The hero of the realm of truth, Bharata, was born of Queen Kaikeyi. Possessed of every grace, he was endowed with a quarter of the glory of Shri Vishnu.

Sumitra gave birth to Lakshmana and Shatrughna, heroes skilful in the wielding of weapons and also partaking of Shri Vishnu's glory.

Bharata was born when the star Pushya was in the ascendant in the Lagna Meena.[1] During the ascendance of the star Shlasa in the Lagna Karka,[2] at the time of sunrise Shatrughna was born.

Each of the sons of the king had special attributes and were endowed with great qualities, they were as resplendent as the Purva,[3] Uttara[4] and Bhadripata[5] stars.

At that time gandharvas played divine melodies, nymphs danced, celestial drums were heard and the gods showered flowers from the sky.

Everywhere in the capital, signs of rejoicing were apparent; the streets were filled with actors and dancers and those who sang or played on various instruments.

The king gave gifts to the bards and ballad singers and conferred wealth and cows on the brahmins.

The four children were named on the twelfth day; the eldest son received the name Ramachandra, and the name given to the son of Queen Kaikeyi was Bharata.

The sons of Queen Sumitra were called Lakshmana and Shatrughna. The ceremony was performed by the holy Sage Vasishtha with great joy. After this, the brahmins of the capital and the country were feasted and presented with gifts and precious gems.

Resembling the deity Shri Brahma, the king showed universal

[1] Lagna Meena—Pisces.
[2] Lagna Karka—Cancer. Lagna is the point where the horizon and the path of the planets meet.
[3] Purva—Star of the East.
[4] Uttara—Northern Star.
[5] Bhadripata—One of the Lunar Asterisms.

benevolence. The princes grew in the knowledge of the Veda, in courage and active goodwill to all. Though each was wise, learned and possessed of every virtue, yet Shri Ramachandra excelled them in truthfulness and energy, and was beloved of all, like the flawless orb of the moon. Expert in mounting the elephant, the horse and the chariot, he was skilful in archery and devoted to the service of his parents.

Shri Lakshmana cherished an exceeding love for his elder brother Shri Ramachandra, the delight of the world, and Shri Rama loved him also as his very self. Shri Ramachandra loved Lakshmana who was endowed with every excellent quality, as his own life, and neither slept nor partook of any nourishment without the other.

When Raghava mounted on horseback, engaged in the chase, Shri Lakshmana followed with bow and arrows to protect him.

Emulating the example of Shri Ramachandra, Bharata loved Shatrughna and was loved by him with equal affection.

The monarch was as pleased and satisfied with his four sons as is Shri Brahma with the four Vedas. Observing the wisdom, prudence and modesty of his children, who were endowed with every great attribute, King Dasaratha derived as great a delight from them as Brahma from the four guardians of the earth.

The princes studied the Veda with perseverance, affectionately attended on the king and acquired proficiency in the use of arms.

One day when the illustrious sovereign was in council with his relatives, ministers, and learned preceptors, deliberating on the marriage of his four sons, the great Sage Vishwamitra appeared in the capital. Seeking an audience with the king, he addressed the doorkeeper, saying: " Inform the king speedily that the son of Gadhi of the race of Kaushika is at the gate." The awe-stricken guard hastened to the royal apartment and conveyed the tidings with due respect to his majesty, who with his Guru Vasishtha went forth to welcome the sage at the gate and bring him into the royal palace.

As Brahma welcomes Indra, so did they greet the muni, and beholding that resplendent and mighty ascetic, the observer of great vows, of cheerful countenance, the king offered him arghya according to the prescribed tradition.

The virtuous Vishwamitra then enquired of the king concerning the welfare of the empire, the prosperity of his people, relatives and friends and also as to the state of the royal treasury. Thereafter, the sage questioned the monarch further, saying: "Are thy vassals obedient to thee? Are thine enemies subdued? Are the Vedic sacrifices duly observed in thy dominion? Are strangers entertained with fitting hospitality?" Then after enquiring as to the well-being of Shri Vasishtha and other sages, Shri Vishwamitra entered the palace.

Here the king once more paid him reverence and with delight addressed him saying: "O August Sage, thy coming has caused me as great a joy as the acquisition of ambrosia or the advent of rain falling on the parched earth. O Sage, thy approach is as grateful to me as the birth of a son to one without an heir or the recovery of his wealth to one who imagined it to be irretrievably lost. O Mighty Sage, I welcome thee with my whole heart, say what commands thou hast for me? When thy glance doth fall upon me, O Sage, I become righteous and acquire merit; to-day my life is rendered fruitful and the purpose of my birth is accomplished since thou hast visited me. O Auspicious One, formerly thou wast a warrior sage, illustrious by virtue of thy sacred practices, but now thou art become a brahmin[1] and art worthy of supreme worship by me. Thine advent has conferred purity and blessing on me, and by thy sacred presence both the kingdom and I have been purged of every offence. Be pleased to tell us of the purpose of thy coming, I desire to manifest my gratitude to thee by rendering thee service. O Kaushika, do not hesitate to speak thy will, I am ready to do anything for thee; thou art to me as a god. O Brahman Seer, by beholding thee, I have acquired the great merits of a pilgrimage."

Hearing the words of King Dasaratha, sweet sounding and in accordance with the scriptural injunctions, the great sage, the repository of all excellent qualities, was highly gratified.

[1] Vishwamitra was originally of the warrior class and won brahminhood by his asceticism. His story follows later.

CHAPTER 19

Vishwamitra's request

HEARING the laudatory and admirable words of that Lion among kings, Dasaratha, the great Sage Vishwamitra answered: "O Great King, who in the world save one of the House of Ikshwaku, instructed by Shri Vasishtha, could give tongue to such utterances? O Illustrious Monarch, I will now unfold my purpose, do thou fulfil it and prove the truth of thy words.

"O Chief of Men, when I undertake the observance of sacred sacrifices to enhance my perfection, two rakshasas, adepts in magic, create great impediments. When, after long effort, the sacrifice approaches consummation, then these two rakshasas, Maricha and Suvahu destroy the rite and defile the altar with blood and flesh. My holy endeavours being thus frustrated, I become despondent and leave the place of sacrifice. O King, it is not permitted to me to show wrath when engaged in sacrifice, and I therefore refrain from cursing them. Do thou lend me the services of thy son, Shri Ramachandra, the truthful, the brave, that hero, whose locks fall on his cheeks.

"Under my protection, he will destroy those mischievous rakshasas and I will confer great blessings on him. I will instruct him for his good in many sciences and he will become famous in the three worlds. The rakshasas will not be able to stand against Rama and no one else can destroy them. They are proud and powerful, but now, owing to their sins, their destruction is imminent, they will not be able to withstand Shri Ramachandra,

"Do not allow a father's affection to overcome thee; I assure thee that in the presence of Shri Ramachandra, the rakshasas are as good as slain. Rama's virtues are known to Shri Vasishtha and other ascetics. O King, if thou seekest everlasting renown and merit in this world, then let Shri Rama go with me. Seek the advice of Shri Vasishtha and thy counsellors and if they approve the project, give me Ramachandra. Be pleased, O King, to give up thy beloved son for the space of ten days, so that I may complete the sacrifice. O King, help me in

furthering my sacrifice, and do not let the allotted time pass in vain. Do what is auspicious, do not grieve."

The upright and resplendent Sage Vishwamitra having uttered these righteous words, became silent.

The words of Shri Vishwamitra filled the king with anxiety and he became distraught. Because of these inexorable words, the monarch trembled and fell unconscious from his seat overcome with grief.

CHAPTER 20

The king's reluctance to allow Shri Rama to contend with Maricha and Suvahu

For some time the king lay insensible, then regaining consciousness he said: "My lotus-eyed Rama is but fifteen years old, I cannot believe he is capable of contending with the rakshasas. I possess a large and well-equipped army and will myself lead it against the demons. My seasoned warriors, who are courageous and skilled in bearing weapons and who are suitably remunerated by me, are fit to fight the rakshasas in battle; therefore, do not ask for Rama. I myself, bearing my bow and arrows, will lead the army in the field and fight to my last breath. With this protection, thy sacrifice will come to a successful conclusion. I will go thither in person, do not take away Shri Ramachandra. Shri Rama is still a child without military experience, he cannot estimate the strength or weakness of the enemy, he has not yet acquired proficiency in warfare.

"Thou knowest well, O Sage, how crafty are the rakshasas in combat. Shri Ramachandra is not capable of opposing them successfully. I cannot bear the thought of Ramachandra contending with them. O Sage, I shall not live, even for a moment, if Shri Rama be separated from me, therefore, I entreat thee, do not ask for him. Should'st thou insist on Rama accompanying thee, then take my forces also with thee. O August Vishwamitra, recollect I pray thee that I am now nine

thousand years old and have begotten these sons with great difficulty. These princes are dearer to me than life itself and Shri Ramachandra is the dearest of them all. Excelling in virtue, he is my eldest son, therefore, do not take him from me. O Great Sage, how powerful are these rakshasas? Who are their supporters and how dost thou imagine Shri Rama can destroy them? O Blessed Lord, say if thou deemest that I and my army may successfully oppose those rakshasas who are skilled in magic?"

Shri Vishwamitra answered: "O King, Ravana, born of the great family of Poulastya, having been favoured by Brahma with a boon, is oppressing the three worlds. He is exceedingly powerful and supported by many asuric followers. It is said that this great warrior Ravana is the King of Asuras. He is the brother of Kuvera and the son of the Sage Vishravas. He does not obstruct the lesser sacrifices in person, but two mighty rakshasas named Maricha and Suvahu, prompted by him, disrupt the sacrificial rites."

The king listened to the muni's words and then spoke: "I am not able to oppose that evil-souled asura. O Knower of the Law of Righteousness, I am but a wretched man and thou art worthy of my worship; thou art verily a god and also my spiritual preceptor. Since the gods, the danavas, gandharvas, yakshas, birds and snakes cannot destroy Ravana, how can man do so? In battle, Ravana is able to defeat the mightiest warriors, it is certain therefore, that neither I nor my army can contend with him. How can I then send my son, beautiful as a god, but inexperienced in war, to oppose Ravana? O Sage, I will not let my young child go. Lavana, the son of Madhu is among those who destroy the sacrifice. I will not give up my son. The sons of Sunda and Upasunda, Maricha and Suvahu, who resemble death itself in battle, are among those who impede the sacrifice. They are skilful and seasoned warriors, I dare not send my young son against them. Whoever thou chooseth, friends, relatives or even I myself will accompany thee to engage in the fight."

On hearing the king's injudicious words, the holy sage was enraged. As an oblation poured into the fire adds to the fierceness of the flame, so did the words of King Dasaratha add to the fire of anger kindled in the sage's heart.

CHAPTER 21

On Vasishtha's advice the king acquiesces

HEARING the words of King Dasaratha inspired by solicitude for his son, the great sage replied in displeasure :—

" O King, recollect that thou art born in the house of Raghu, how can'st thou presume to break thy promise ? This action is unworthy of thy royal line and is also improper. If this be thy determined desire, I will take my leave, do thou live at ease amidst thy relatives and friends, O Violater of thy Word ! "

At the wrath of the august sage, the whole earth shook and the gods began to tremble. Seeing the whole world shaken with terror, the wise and patient muni Shri Vasishtha intervened, and thus addressed the king :—

" O King, thou art born in the family of Ikshwaku and art righteousness personified ! Blessed by fortune, filled with patience and endurance, thou hast cherished great vows and should'st not, therefore, abandon dharma.[1] The three worlds know thee as virtuous, it is thy duty to maintain integrity and not to act in contradiction to it. O Chief of Men, if one making a promise does not honour it, he loses the merit of his good deeds. It is, therefore, for thee to be faithful to thy word and let Rama accompany this sage. Though Shri Ramachandra is inexperienced in warfare, yet the asuras will not be able to overcome him. Furthermore, he is under the protection of Shri Vishwamitra and no harm can come to him. How can one steal the nectar that is surrounded by fire ? The holy Vishwamitra is virtue itself, his powers are unsurpassed, and there is none living equal to him in wisdom and asceticism. In the whole world of men and other beings, none excels him in the use of weapons and none has fathomed the depth of his nature. Neither the celestials, nor the sages, nor the asuras, nor any other beings know the full glory of this sage. The god Krishasawa and his highly virtuous sons gave every variety of weapon to Vishwamitra when he was king. The two daughters

[1] Dharma—The traditional right action is dharma—personal action is duty. It has been thought best to translate it as righteousness in most cases.

of Daksha, Jaya and Suprabha invented thousands of resplendent weapons. Shri Vishwamitra is not one, but many in one form; he is illustrious, mighty and able to defeat any in battle. Jaya produced five hundred weapons supremely potent and capable of destroying a host of asuras. Suprabha also created five hundred weapons of war which no foe in the world could withstand. Shri Vishwamitra is an adept in the use of all these arms, O King, he is also able to create many new weapons and there is nothing in the three divisions of time[1] which is not known to him. Do not hesitate to send thy son Rama with this mighty and courageous sage, Shri Vishwamitra, and do not entertain any fears for his safety. The Sage Vishwamitra is well able to destroy the demons, but asks for the services of thy son for his own good."

The Guru Vasishtha having thus exhorted the monarch, the king cheerfully acquiesced to Shri Ramachandra accompanying the sage.

CHAPTER 22

Ramachandra and Lakshmana set forth with Vishwamitra

INSTRUCTED by Shri Vasishtha, King Dasaratha with a cheerful countenance sent for Prince Rama and also Prince Lakshmana. At the time of their departure, the Peace Chant was recited by the king, whilst the Guru Vasishtha pronounced the benediction. The illustrious sovereign then smelt the heads[2] of his sons with joy and delivered them into the care of the sage.

When the lotus-eyed Ramachandra and Prince Lakshmana had taken their leave, Vayu[3] sent forth cool and gentle breezes redolent with fragrance and the celestial beings showered down flowers, to the sound of the beating of drums and the blowing of conches.

[1] Past, present and future.
[2] The traditional embrace.
[3] Vayu—The god of the wind.

Shri Vishwamitra led the way followed by the most illustrious Ramachandra, then came Shri Lakshmana of flowing locks, bearing a bow in his hand.

The two handsome and powerful princes with quivers on their backs and bows in their hands, adding lustre to the ten cardinal points, followed the muni as if two three-headed snakes[1] were following Shri Vishwamitra or as the Aswinikumaras and Kinneras follow Brahma.

Shri Ramachandra and Lakshmana, armed with their bows, adorned with precious jewels and wearing gloves made of deerskin, resplendent and beautiful, girt with swords, following the holy sage, looked like the two sons of Shiva.

Coming to the river Sarayu, nine miles to the south of the capital, the Sage Vishwamitra addressed Shri Rama in gentle accents, saying: "O Child, purify thy body with water. When thou hast done so, I will teach thee the use of Bala and Atibala. The application of these two herbs will prevent thee from being fatigued or suffering from disease, nor will age affect thee. Even should'st thou retire to rest without performing the purification ceremony no demon will be able to afflict thee; none in the world will equal thee in prowess. O Rama, no one in the three worlds will rival thee in good fortune, skill, knowledge and practical wisdom. O Prince, when thou hast learnt these sciences, thou wilt be able to answer any question and thou wilt be unique in scholarship. These two sciences, O Rama, are the parents of all other sciences. Thou wilt be able to control hunger and thirst by their application. O Prince of the House of Raghu, by the mastery of this lore, Bala and Atibala, thou wilt attain renown throughout the whole world. These brilliant sciences are the daughters of Brahma, I shall impart them to thee, O Prince, because thou art qualified to receive them. O Rama, all the fruits of this knowledge are already thy attributes, yet when thou hast mastered it, thou wilt be able to teach it to others."

Shri Ramachandra then poured the water over his body and with a cheerful countenance said to the Sage Vishwamitra:—

"O Great Rishi, I am thy servant, teach me these sciences."

[1] The bow on one shoulder, the quiver on the other with the head between gave the appearance of a three-headed snake.

Possessed of the knowledge of these two sciences, the mighty Rama resembled the sun in autumn, emitting a thousand rays. Then the two brothers massaged the feet of the holy Guru and passed the night pleasantly on the banks of the river Sarayu. Shri Rama being unaccustomed to sleeping on the ground, the two sons of King Dasaratha made a bed of grass, then having listened to the gentle words of Shri Vishwamitra, they passed the night in sleep.

CHAPTER 23

They reach the hermitage of Kama

A LITTLE before dawn, the great Muni Vishwamitra, reclining on his grassy couch, addressed the princes, saying: " O Son of Queen Kaushalya, O Rama, the dawn is about to break, arise and perform thy morning devotions."

The two princes, hearing the words of the most generous sage, rose, performed their ablutions, offered ceremonial water to the rising sun, worshipped their ancestors and began to repeat the holy Gayatri.[1] Their devotions completed, they offered salutations with great reverence to the distinguished ascetic and stood ready to proceed further.

In their company, the holy sage reached the confluence of the rivers where the Ganges unites herself with the Sarayu. There they beheld the holy ascetics in their sacred hermitage, where for a long time they had practised Yoga assiduously.

Seeing the peaceful hermitage, Shri Ramachandra and Lakshmana were filled with delight and said to the Sage Vishwamitra: " O Blessed Lord, whose holy hermitage is this? Who dwells here? We are both eager to hear of this."

The great sage smiled and answered Rama, saying: " Hear, my son, I will tell thee who formerly dwelt here. Kandarpa,[2]

[1] The Gayatri—Said to be the mother of all prayers, the most sacred text of the Veda.

[2] Kandarpa—The god of love.

whom the pundits called Kama once took human form and fixed in meditation, worshipped the Lord Shiva here. When Shri Shiva was passing with his newly-wedded bride, accompanied by celestial beings, Kama tried to agitate the mind of the Lord Shiva and reaped the due punishment of his insolence. O Son of the House of Raghu, Shiva in wrath opened his third eye and the members of Kama's body were consumed. Since Kama was reduced to ashes by the God, he has been a disembodied being. O Rama, since that time, he has been known as Ananga (bodiless) and the country where his limbs were strewn as he sought to flee, is known as Anga. This hermitage belongs to the Lord Shiva and the holy men who dwell here are his traditional devotees: they are both righteous and sinless. O Rama, Thou of pleasing looks, this night I shall break my journey at this hermitage and to-morrow we shall cross the sacred river and proceed further. O Rama, let us first purify ourselves by bathing and then recite the holy Gayatri silently, offering oblations into the sacred fire, we will thereafter pass the night in the hermitage."

While Shri Rama and the sage were conversing, the holy ascetics dwelling in the hermitage, knew by the power of their Yoga, that these great beings were approaching and were highly gratified.

Having presented arghya to Shri Vishwamitra, they then offered hospitality to Shri Ramachandra and Lakshmana. Entertained by those dwelling in the hermitage who regaled them with the holy traditions and philosophical discourses, they remained there for their evening devotion and with great delight abode in the hermitage of Kama, the devout sages gathering round Shri Vishwamitra who engaged them in pleasing converse.

CHAPTER 24

The two princes with Vishwamitra behold the dark forest of Taraka

WHEN the day dawned, the two princes performed their daily devotions and followed Shri Vishwamitra to the river.

The keepers of sacred vows, the dwellers in the holy hermitage accompanied them to the river bank and arranged for an excellent boat to take them across; they said to Shri Vishwamitra :—

" O Great Rishi, do not delay, please board the vessel with the royal princes, now, and thus avoid the heat of the day."

Shri Vishwamitra paid reverence to the devout sages and proceeded to cross the sacred river. When the craft was in mid-stream, the roar of the waters was heard by Shri Ramachandra and his younger brother. They questioned the holy sage, saying: " O Venerable Lord, what is the cause of this tumult ? "

In answer to Shri Ramachandra, Shri Vishwamitra described the cause of the sound in the following manner :—

" O Prince, on Mount Kailasha,[1] Shri Brahma created a lake by the power of his thought, on account of which it is called the Lake of the Mind (Manasarovara). The holy river Sarayu rises in the Manasa Lake and flows through the capital Ayodhya, here it joins the sacred stream Gunga, and this sound is produced when the two rivers unite. With concentrated mind, offer salutations to them."

The two royal princes made obeisance to the rivers, and having reached the southern bank, left the boat and proceeded onward. Walking further, the two princes beheld a dark and terrible forest and Shri Ramachandra again addressed the Sage as follows: "O Great Sage, this forest looks dark and sinister; above the ceaseless clamour of crickets and other insects, fearful beasts can be heard roaring. The forest resounds with their dread cries while the harsh and discordant notes of birds echo

[1] Mt. Kailasha—The abode of Lord Shiva.

through it. See, O Sage! Boars, lions, tigers and elephants abound there, it is overgrown with dhara, ashwakarna, kujaja, patala, sillea and tinduka trees,[1] it is indeed terrifying."

The highly resplendent Sage Vishwamitra hearing these words, said: "My son, I will tell thee something of this dark forest. Formerly there were two cities named Malava and Karusha, they were both prosperous and resembled the cities built by the gods. O Rama, in ancient times, Indra slew the wicked Vritrasura then, being hungry and thirsty, he went to an inauspicious and isolated place where he became distressed on account of the sin of having slain a brahmin. The gods and holy sages bathed Indra in the sacred waters of the Ganges, and purged away his sin by pouring jars of water charged with mantrams over him. In this way, the remorse of Indra was appeased, the pollution caused by slaying a brahmin was washed away and he was highly gratified. Purified and sinless, Indra gladly conferred a boon on this land saying: 'These two cities will be known as Malava and Karusha and they will acquire great renown, their prosperity will be famed throughout the earth.'

"When Indra thus favoured these two cities, the celestial beings praised him and cried: 'Be it so.' These two places soon enjoyed great prosperity and fame. In the course of time, a perverse yakshini[2] was born here, possessing the strength of a thousand elephants. Her name was Taraka, the wife of Sunda, and her son was the rakshasa, Maricha, who was equal in strength to Indra himself. He possessed long arms, an enormous mouth, and a gigiantic body. This terrible rakshasa continually destroys the people of these two lands.

"O Rama, the wicked Taraka constantly plunders and devastates these two countries. Obstructing the road, she lives at two miles distance from here; let us enter the forest of Taraka. By my command, O Rama, do thou slay the wicked yakshini and set the country free. O Rama, none dares to come hither for fear of Taraka; save this land from the dangerous demoness. This is why this forest is uninhabited, but thou can'st restore it. This wicked yakshini is unceasingly bent on her evil designs."

[1] See separate glossary of Flowers and Trees.
[2] Yakshini—a female yaksha, a class of supernatural beings attendant on the god of wealth, Kuvera.

CHAPTER 25

Vishwamitra seeks to convince Rama that it is his duty to slay Taraka

HEARING the words of Shri Vishwamitra, Shri Rama of limitless power and influence uttered the following auspicious words :—

" O Great Sage, it is said that the yakshinis have little power, then how is it that Taraka has come to possess the strength of a thousand elephants ? "

The mahatma listened to Rama's words and said : " O Prince, I will relate the story to thee. This female demon has acquired her great strength by virtue of a boon which she received. In the past, a powerful yaksha by the name of Suketu, who was virtuous but childless, performed many yogic practices which pleased Shri Brahma, who promised him a daughter by name Taraka, and conferred on her the strength of a thousand elephants. But the most illustrious Brahma did not grant a son to that yaksha. When the daughter grew up and possessed both the charm of youth and great beauty, her father gave her in marriage to Sunda, the son of Jambha. After some time, the yakshini gave birth to a son. His name was Maricha and he was very powerful ; though born of yaksha parentage he became a rakshasa through a curse. O Rama, when the Sage Agastya condemned Sunda to death by cursing him, then Taraka and her son wished to devour the sage. Seeing her running towards him, the blessed Sage Agastya cursed Maricha and said ' Become a demon '. He also cursed that wicked woman so that she became a cannibal with a hideous countenance. Shri Agastya said : ' May thy beauty vanish and mayest thou become a terrible rakshasi.' Then Taraka, transported with anger under this curse, began to destroy this sacred land because it was here that the Sage Agastya performed his yogic practices.

" O Rama, thou must slay this wicked and impious demon Taraka, who ravages the land. For the good of the brahmins and the king, O Raghava, accomplish this ; do not hesitate to destroy this vile yakshini. It is the duty of a warrior to protect those of the four castes. A prince must not eschew

deeds that are painful and difficult, for the preservation of his people. It is according to the law of eternal dharma, O Rama, that even deeds that appear ruthless, are permitted to those appointed to protect their subjects. O Raghava, Taraka is wholly evil, and therefore must be destroyed. It is said that in the past Manthara, a daughter of King Virochana, was slain by Indra because she was the cause of the destruction of others. The blessed Lord Vishnu Himself slew the wife of the Sage Bhrigu, devoted to her husband, and the mother of Shukra because she was intent on killing Indra. Many other great-souled princes of old also condemned wicked women to death. Therefore, it is for thee to fulfil thy duty and slay this yakshini without delay."

CHAPTER 26

How the yakshini Taraka was slain

THE son of Dasaratha, firm in his vows, listened to the inspiring words of the Sage Vishwamitra, which filled him with ardour, and with joined palms he humbly addressed him :—

" To fulfil the commands of my royal sire and to honour his promise, I deem it my duty to act according to thy instructions without hesitation. My father, the emperor, at the time of my departure from Ayodhya bade me carry out thy injunctions —O Muni, I shall honour them. I am prepared to execute thy commands, O Rishi, because it will lead to the benefit of the brahmins and the king, and will also bring happiness to the people of this land."

Having spoken thus, Shri Rama grasped his bow and, twanging the string, filled all the cardinal points with the sound. The denizens of the forest were terrified, and Taraka was overcome with helpless rage. Full of wrath that yakshini ran in the direction from which the sound came and Shri Ramachandra beholding that gigantic and misshapen monster was incensed and said to Lakshmana: " O Brother, behold this

fearful yakshini of formidable size, whose very aspect would strike terror into timorous hearts. See, O Lakshmana, how I shall cut off her ears and nose and put her to flight! She is horrible, versed in black magic and hard to subdue, but it is not proper to deprive a woman of her life. A woman is worthy of protection, therefore, I shall incapacitate her, by depriving her of the power of motion thus preventing her from doing further mischief."

While Shri Rama was still speaking, the dreadful Taraka ran towards him roaring with uplifted arms. The Rishi Vishwamitra approaching her encouraged Rama, with a shout, crying, "Jai to the descendant of Raghu". Notwithstanding, Taraka raised a thick cloud of dust and for a while Shri Rama and Lakshmana could see nothing. Then the yakshini by the power of magic caused a shower of rocks to rain on the two brothers and Rama was now filled with wrath. Parrying the rain of rocks and advancing towards her, he cut off both her hands. Then Shri Lakshmana severed the nose and ears of the asuri who had already been deprived of her hands. Assuming various forms, she tried to deceive the princes by vanishing away. Then from her hiding place, she showered heavy rocks on them, and a rain of stones fell on every side.

Shri Vishwamitra, who stood watching the combat, now cried: "Enough, she does not deserve further mercy; should'st thou spare her, she will gain strength through her magic powers and will again break up our holy rites. The evening is approaching and in the evening rakshasas are overcome with difficulty; slay her, therefore, without delay."

Then Shri Vishwamitra pointed out the concealed yakshini to Rama, who drew from his quiver arrows capable of following sound and surrounded her with them. The powerful female demon, an adept in occult powers, encompassed by the rain of arrows, advanced roaring, towards the princes. With an arrow, Shri Rama pierced the heart of the wicked yakshini, who fell to the ground and expired. Seeing the terrible yakshini slain, Indra and other celestial beings worshipped Shri Rama, crying: "Well done, well done, O Holy Rama!" All the gods filled with joy, said to Shri Vishwamitra: "O Muni, may prosperity attend thee, Indra and the gods are gratified with

Shri Ramachandra's feat of arms, show thy special favour to him *and deliver to him the two kinds of weapons, natural and supernatural*, belonging to Krishashwa. Present Shri Ramachandra, who is worthy to receive them, with all the other mighty weapons, he is wholly devoted to thee; these two princes are destined to achieve great things."

Having uttered these words, the gods bowed down to the Sage Vishwamitra and returned to their abode.

Evening fell, and the holy sage gladdened by the slaying of the wicked Taraka by Shri Rama, smelt the head of the prince and addressed him thus: "O Rama, this night we will remain here and to-morrow morning proceed to my hermitage."

Shri Rama rejoiced to hear the muni's words and rested happily during the night in the forest.

On the day that Taraka was slain, the forest, freed from the curse, adorned with champaka,[1] ashoka,[1] mango and other trees, looked as charming as the forest of Chitraratha.[2]

Shri Ramachandra, whom the siddhas praised for slaying Taraka, passed the night in the forest, awaiting the dawn.

CHAPTER 27

Shri Rama is given the celestial weapons

HAVING passed the night resting in the forest, the illustrious Sage Vishwamitra spoke to Rama smilingly, in sweet accents :—

"O Prince of Great Renown, I am entirely satisfied with thee and am happy to give thee these weapons by means of which thou shalt be able to conquer and subdue all thine enemies, whether devas, asuras or nagas.[3] Accept these divine weapons,[4] O Rama. Here is the great celestial disc and the Dunda weapon,

[1] Champaka—a type of magnolia. } For full list of trees
Ashoka—a tree resembling the coconut. } see separate glossary.
[2] Chitraratha—The king of the gandharvas, q.v. page 3.
[3] Nagas—The serpent race.
[4] Weapons—for full list see separate glossary.

the Disc of Dharma, the Kala weapon, the Disc of Vishnu and the irresistible Weapon of Indra. O Great Prince, here is the Mace and the Spear of Mahendra the Brahma-Shira and the Ishika. O Mighty-armed One, take the Shankara weapon and the two great maces Koumoduki and Lohitamukhi. O Great Prince receive also the mighty Dharma-pasha, the Kala-pasha and the Varuna-pasha and two other maces called Shoshka and Ashani; the Pinaka weapon, the Narayana weapon and the fire-emitting weapon Agneya.

" O Rama, take this wind weapon, Vayuvya, and the horse-headed weapon, Hayashira, also the Krauncha weapon. I give thee further two powers and the weapons called Kankala, Mushala, Rapala and Kinkini. O Mighty Prince, I confer on thee the two supernatural weapons named Vidyadhara and Nandana, useful in fighting the Asuras.

" Take this jewel among swords, which I give to thee, O Mighty-armed One, and another supernatural weapon named Gandharva, and here, O Rama, is one very dear to me called Manava. Here are Prashaman, Soura, Praswaprana, Darpana and that which has the power of drying up, and the pain-inflicting weapon causing lamentation. I grant thee also the strength to bear the Madana-astra presented to me by Kandarpa which creates in man unbearable sexual desire so that he is unable to fight. Here also is the Paisha-astra and the Mohan-astra.

" O! Illustrious Prince, receive also the weapon that produces inertia, and the great Saumana weapon. O Great Prince, here are the Samvartta, Moushalya, Sattyastra and Mayadhara, and take the Tajaprabha by means of which the strength and courage of the foe are withdrawn, and also the Shishira which chills and the Somastra and Twashtra.

" O Rama, now thou art all-powerful and knowest the secrets of magic, yet take the Bava, Shitesu and Manava astra also. O Prince, receive the Paramodara-astra, take all these weapons from me."

Then the great Vishwamitra turned his face to the east and performed the purificatory rites with joy, conferring on Rama the mantrams[1] for employing the weapons and instructing him

[1] Mantrams—sacred formulas.

in the methods unknown even to the gods. All these weapons did Shri Vishwamitra confer on Rama, and he, repeating the appropriate mantrams, caused their presiding deities to appear before him. Approaching with joined palms, they said: "O Prince of the House of Raghu, we are thy servants and will obey thy behests."

Shri Rama, having surveyed and blessed them, answered: "Come and serve me when I summon you."

Thereafter, Shri Ramachandra offering salutations to the venerable Sage Vishwamitra, said: "Let us proceed further, my Lord."

CHAPTER 28

He is instructed in their use

HAVING received the weapons and instructions for their use, Shri Rama addressed the sage in charming accents as they proceeded onward.

He said: "O Blessed One, by thy grace, I have received weapons which even the devas and asuras cannot easily obtain. Be pleased to tell me further, how I may withdraw these weapons when they are discharged?"

Then the supremely patient and holy sage taught Shri Ramachandra the method of withdrawing the mantra-propelled weapons and gave him more by the name of Satya-vana, Satya-kirti, Dhrishta, Raphasa, Pratiharatara, Parangmukha, Avangmukha, Lakshya, Alakshya, Drirnabha and Sunabhuka, Dasharsha, Shutavaktra, Dasha-shirsha, Shatodara, Dharmanabha and Maha-nabha, Dunda-nabha and Swanabhuka, Jyotisha and Shakuna and the two weapons Nirashya and Vimala, also the Yogandhara and Vinidra, Ditya and Pramanthana, Shuchivahu, Mahavanu, Nishkali, Virucha, Sarchi-mali Dhriti and Mali, Vrittiman and Ruchira, Pitryia and Soamanasvidhuta and Makara, Karavira with Rati, Dhana and Dhanya.

The holy sage said, "O Rama, receive also Kamarupa, Kamaruchi, Moha and Avarana, also Jrim Bhala, Sarpa-natha

with Sandhana and Varuna. Receive from me, O Rama, the Krishashwa which assumes any form—O Prince, mayest thou be triumphant, thou art worthy to possess these weapons ". Shri Rama answered " May it be so, my Lord ".

The holy rishi[1] then placed the divine weapons before Rama, some of which shone like fire, others with the colour of smoke and yet others which resembled the sun and moon. With joined palms the deities presiding over them addressed Shri Rama with submission, saying: " O Prince, we are at thy service, what would'st thou have us accomplish ? " Shri Rama answered: " When called to mind in the time of need, grant me aid, now depart, all of you."

Offering obeisance to Shri Ramachandra, they replied: " Be it so, my Lord," and returned to their abode.

Shri Rama then questioned the great rishi, saying: " O Spiritual Sovereign, what is this that resembles a dark cloud near the mountain ? It would seem to be a grove of trees, pleasing to the sight, filled with deer. I hear birds singing sweetly, have we then passed the dangerous forest which was a cause of fear ? O Lord, let us rest here at peace; tell me, whose hermitage is this ? O Great Muni, are we now in thine own hermitage, where the wicked demons, the slayers of brahmins obstruct thy sacrifice ? O Blessed One, be pleased to show me the place of thy sacrifice. O Wise One, I will slay the meddlesome demons who hinder thy devotions. Be gracious enough to enlighten me in the matter, O Sage."

CHAPTER 29

Vishwamitra relates the story of his hermitage and commences the sacrifice

To the most glorious Shri Ramachandra making enquiry concerning the forest, the illustrious Sage Vishwamitra made answer :—

[1] Rishi—an illumined sage, who has had a vision of Truth or Reality.

" O Rama, this is the place at which the Blessed Lord Vishnu, the first among the gods, dwelt, observing his yogic practices for immeasurable years and previous to that, it belonged to the glorious Vamana.[1] This spot is called Siddha-ashrama, for here, these great souls practised austerities with success. At that time, Bali the son of King Virochana, conquered Indra and other devas, together with the deities of the wind and he ruled over the three worlds. When Bali initiated a sacrifice, the devas, under the leadership of Agni[2] approached Shri Vishnu in this hermitage and said: 'O Lord, the son of Virochana, King Bali is observing a great sacrifice; while it is yet incomplete, come to our aid. The Lord grants the requests of those who seek His favour, therefore, by the power of Thy Yoga and for our own good, take the form of a dwarf (Vamana) and secure our welfare.' Meantime, O Rama, the Sage Kashyapa, resplendent as fire, who was endowed with supreme lustre by virtue of his yogic practices, with his spouse Aditi, having completed a thousand years' austerities, began to praise Madhusudana, the conferrer of boons, saying: 'O Supreme Purusha,[3] Thou art adored through austerity and Thou dost grant the fruit of austerity, Thy nature is knowledge and asceticism, it is by virtue of austerity that I behold Thee. O Lord, in Thy body I see the whole world animate and inanimate. In Thee Who art beginningless and indescribable, I take refuge.'

" The blessed Vishnu was pleased with this prayer and said to the sinless Sage: 'O Kashyapa, mayest thou see perfection, thou hast merited a boon, ask what thou desirest.'

" Then Kashyapa, the son of Marichi, answered: 'O Blessed Lord, Aditi, the gods and I beseech Thee to grant this boon —Become the son of my sinless wife and myself. O Lord, become the younger brother of Indra and assist the sorrow-stricken devas. This spot, by Thy grace, shall then be known as Siddha-Ashrama.' (Hermitage of the Perfect Ones.)

" Upon this, the resplendent Vishnu was born of the womb of Aditi as the incarnation Vamana and disguised as a mendicant, he approached King Bali. Of him, he requested a piece of

[1] Vamana—An incarnation of Shri Vishnu as the holy Dwarf.
[2] Agni—The god of fire.
[3] Purusha—The Supreme Being, the Soul of the Universe. Literally the Lord of the body, called the city of the nine gates.

ground that could be covered by three strides, and having obtained what he asked, he covered the whole universe in three steps.

"This restful hermitage formerly belonging to Vamana, whose devotee I am, is enjoyed by me. Here the rakshasas wreak destruction. O Lion among men, remain here and slay them. O Rama, to-day let us enter the Siddha-Ashrama together. O Friend, this hermitage is not only mine but thine also."

Accompanied by Shri Ramachandra and Lakshmana, the holy sage entered the hermitage, which appeared as beautiful as the autumn moon attended by the planet Punarvasu.[1] When the sages dwelling in the Siddha-Ashrama perceived Shri Vishwamitra, they rose and saluted him with joy. Having duly honoured the resplendent sage, they entertained the princes in a fitting manner.

Having rested awhile, the two princes humbly and respectfully addressed the holy sage, saying: "O Great Sage, inaugurate thy sacrifice to-day, may it be attended with good fortune. This place is the Siddha-Ashrama, we wish thee success in thy undertaking."

Thereupon the great sage with due preparation, his mind subdued, began the sacrifice while the two princes kept vigil. Having passed the night in this manner, in accordance with the prescribed rules, they performed their ablutions, repeating the mantram silently, they then paid respect to Shri Vishwamitra and occupied their seats as do those performing a fire-sacrifice.

CHAPTER 30

Maricha and Suvahu obstruct the sacrifice and are slain by Rama

The two princes, knowing what was appropriate in respect to time and place and skilled in the art of conquering their foes, uttered words fitting to the place and occasion.

[1] Punarvasu—The seventh of the lunar asterisms, called Nakshatras or wives of the moon. Punarvasu is the most beloved.

They said: " O Blessed One, we desire to hear at what moment in the course of the sacrifice, the two demons appear? It is essential for us to be acquainted with the matter, to forestall their attack."

The dwellers in the Siddha-ashrama, hearing the words of the princes, and finding them eager to fight the demons, praised them saying: " O Princes, from now on, keep watch over the sacrifice for six days; the Sage Vishwamitra having begun the rite will observe a strict silence during that time."

On this, the two illustrious princes kept watch in the Tapovana forest continuously for six days without sleeping. Armed with bow and arrows they guarded the rishi and his sacrifice with firm resolve. Five days passed without interruption and on the sixth day Shri Ramachandra said to Lakshmana: " Brother, be prepared to-day."

As Shri Rama uttered these words concerning the approaching conflict with the demons, the altar fire blazed up suddenly. The officiating brahmin, the priest and Shri Vishwamitra, who were watching, beheld all the sacrificial implements set on fire.

The sacrifice of the holy sage still proceeding, a great and fearful clamour resounded in the firmament. As in the rainy season, clouds cover the sky, so the demons by the power of magic began to course through the air.

Maricha and Suvahu and other demons surrounding the altar, let fall torrents of blood. Seeing the altar deluged with blood, Shri Ramachandra and Lakshmana were filled with anger and ran to discover the cause. Then they saw Maricha and other demons in the sky. Raghava beholding the demons rushing towards him, said to Lakshmana, " O Lakshmana, see these evil flesh-eating demons, I shall destroy them with the Manava-weapon, as the wind scatters the clouds ".

So saying, Shri Ramachandra hurled the shining Manava weapon at them and striking the breast of Maricha, inflicted a wound. Thus smitten, the demon was flung into the sea, a distance of a hundred miles. Perceiving Maricha reeling, struck senseless by the Manava weapon, Shri Ramachandra addressed Lakshmana, saying: " Behold the power of this great weapon created by the muni! Yet, though Maricha has been deprived of his senses, he is not dead; verily I shall now destroy

those wicked, merciless and sinful blood-drinking demons who obstruct the holy sacrifice." So saying, he seized the fire-weapon and discharged it at the breast of Suvahu, who straightway fell to the ground and expired. On this, Shri Rama destroyed the remaining demons with the air-weapon (Vayuvya).

Thus by slaying the obstructors of the sacrifice did Shri Ramachandra bring delight to the hearts of the sages and was worshipped by them as was formerly the victorious Indra.

When the sacrifice had been successfully completed, perceiving the world to be freed from the interference of the asuras, the Rishi Vishwamitra said to Rama :—

" O Mighty-armed Prince, to-day I have fulfilled my spiritual purpose, thou hast obeyed the commands of thy Guru perfectly, truly thou hast made the Siddha-Ashrama worthy of its name."

CHAPTER 31

Vishwamitra starts out with the two princes to attend King Janaka's sacrifice

THE great hero, the ever-cheerful Rama, together with Lakshmana having successfully assisted Shri Vishwamitra, passed the night in the hermitage.

At dawn, after purifying themselves, they approached Shri Vishwamitra and offered obeisance to him and the other sages. Bowing down before the great muni, who was as resplendent as a blazing fire, they addressed him in submissive tones, saying : " O Great Rishi, we are both thy humble servants, what further commands are there for us ? We are here to obey."

The other rishis, led by Shri Vishwamitra, listened to the words of Shri Ramachandra and answered saying : " O Great One, the King of Mithila, the righteous Janaka is performing a holy sacrifice and we shall attend it. O Great Beings, be pleased to accompany us ; there you will see a rare and wonderful bow. In ancient days this bow was given by the devas to

Janaka, it is exceedingly heavy and splendid. Neither gandharvas nor asuras can bend this great bow, how much less man? To test their skill, great kings have come to the assembly of King Janaka, but none has succeeded in raising the bow and stringing it. O Illustrious One, let us go and see the sacrifice of the King of Mithila and also that marvellous bow. In former days, King Janaka performed a sacrifice and the fruit of it was the great bow which he obtained from the gods who instructed him saying: 'Place this bow in the sacrificial chamber and let it be worshipped with incense, perfume and lights'."

Shri Vishwamitra having related these facts, started out accompanied by the two princes and other sages. Invoking the Vanadevata (Forest Deity) he said to him: "My sacrifice has come to a successful conclusion, may happiness be thine. I am leaving the Siddha-Ashrama for the banks of the sacred river Gunga on the slopes of the Himalayas, situated in the domain of King Janaka."

Then the sage reverently circumambulated the hermitage and turned northwards. As Shri Vishwamitra entered upon his journey, the sages skilled in the knowledge of the science of Brahman, accompanied him with their chattels placed on hundreds of waggons. The birds and beasts of the hermitage also followed them for a long way until the holy muni requested them to turn back.

The sages and the holy muni reached the banks of the river Shona at sunset and, having bathed and recited their evening prayers, performed the fire sacrifice.

Shri Ramachandra and Prince Lakshmana then offered salutations to Shri Vishwamitra and the other rishis, and sat down before them. Thereafter Shri Rama cheerfully enquired: "O Lord, what country is this, covered with verdant groves? Be gracious enough to relate everything concerning it."

The great ascetic of firm vows, was pleased to hear these words and, sitting amidst the sages, he described the country fully to them.

CHAPTER 32

Vishwamitra tells of his ancestors and the dynasty of King Kusha

" O RAMA, in times of yore, there was a king named Kusha, he was the son of a brahmin, a noted ascetic, faithful to his vows, conversant with dharma and ever revered by the virtuous. He wedded a high-born woman of great beauty named Bhidharvi, and begat four sons, each resembling himself. Their names were Kushamba, Kushanabha, Umurita-rajasa and Basu; these four princes were mighty and active, and desirous of teaching them the duties of a kshatriya, the truthful and righteous King Kusha addressed them as follows :—

" ' O My Sons, protect and nourish your subjects, this practice is productive of great merit.'

" In order to carry out the instructions of their sire, these princes founded four cities and named them after themselves. The mighty Kushamba called his city Kaushambi, and the righteous Kushanabha founded the city of Mahodaya. O Rama, Prince Umurita-rajasa founded the city named Dhar-maranya and the Prince Basu called his city Giribrat, also named Basumati. This city was surrounded by five mountain peaks and the river Magadhi or Shona meandering through the mountains resembled a lovely garland. O Rama, this stream the Magadhi flows towards the east and irrigates the fruitful fields on either bank.

" O Prince of Raghu, Kushanabha took in wedlock a nymph named Ghritachi and by her had one hundred beautiful daughters, who on reaching maturity were delightful to look upon. One day, clad in lovely dresses, in beauty of form unparalleled they wandered in the garden like lightning amidst the clouds. Singing, dancing and playing on instruments they seemed to be divine forms which had materialised and descended on the earth, or like the stars in the firmament.

" Seeing those lovely and virtuous princesses, Vayu the wind

god thus addressed them: 'I entreat you all to be wedded to me; give up your mortal form, I will render you immortal. Remember youth is passing and youth among mortals passes even more swiftly; wedded to me, you will be beautiful for ever.'

"The damsels listened to the improper speech of the wind god and replied mockingly: 'O Deity of the Wind, thou knowest all that is passing in the hearts of men, but we know what is passing in thy heart. Why dost thou insult us, O Wind? O Vayu, who art renowned for thy wisdom, we virgins by the power of our devotion and self-control can effect thy downfall, but because the merits of the righteous come to nought when they cause harm to others, we shall preserve our sacred vows inviolate. O Stupid One, heaven forfend that we choose husbands for ourselves without first seeking the approval of our honoured sire. He is as a god to us and our master, and we shall wed the husbands he chooses for us.'

"The wind god was enraged and entering their bodies, twisted and distorted them. Thus afflicted, the princesses in tears, approached their father for assistance.

"The king was grieved to see his daughters in this condition and said: 'O speak, what has occurred? Who, disregarding justice, has deformed you? Tell me all.' The monarch was deeply moved by this event and his heart became heavy."

CHAPTER 33

King Kushanabha's hundred daughters

When the hundred princesses were thus questioned by the king their father, they placed their heads at his feet and answered: "The wind god, who pervades all, has entered the evil path and desired us to forsake virtuous conduct. We told him we were not free to choose our way of life since our father was still living and that he should consult thee if he wished to wed us, but that sinful god, disregarding our request has twisted and deformed our bodies in this manner."

The great king hearing the complaint of the hundred virgins, said to them: "You have acted nobly by practising forbearance towards the deity. It is meet that the generous-minded should exercise forbearance, you have added to the honour of our dynasty. Forbearance is the chief ornament of both man and woman, you have achieved something rare; few are capable of such forbearance. O Virgins, forbearance is charity, forbearance is truth, forbearance is sacrifice. A man's true glory is forbearance; forbearance is dharma. The world is established in forbearance."

Having spoken thus, the princesses were comforted, and the king dismissed them. Then the monarch, mighty like a god, summoned his ministers and consulted them regarding the alliance of his daughters to suitable families at the proper time and place.

Now a great muni named Chuli full of glory derived from prolonged celibacy and highly virtuous, was engaged in sacred austerities for the purpose of spiritual liberation.

At that place, the virgin daughter of the nymph Urmila, named Somada, began to minister to the muni. She attended on the great sage for a long time with undeviating faith and devotion and her Guru was pleased with her; he said to her: "I am pleased with thee, what desire of thine shall I fulfil?"

Perceiving the muni to be highly pleased, that sweet-voiced nymph acquainted with the art of conversation made answer to him: "O King of Kings, I desire to bear a son, resplendent with divine power, a worshipper of God and devoted to dharma. I have no husband, nor do I wish to be the wife of any, as I am a brahmacharini,[1] therefore, by virtue of thy Yoga, grant me a son produced by the power of thy thought."

The divine Sage Chuli was pleased to hear these words and granted her a son named Brahmadatta, by the power of his mind. Brahmadatta became King of Kampila and was as prosperous as Indra in heaven. King Kushanabha resolved to give his daughters in marriage to King Brahmadatta. Kushanabha requested King Brahmadatta to visit him and joyfully gave him his daughters in marriage.

[1] Brahmachari or brahmacharini—male or female celibate religious student who lives with the teacher and is devoted to the practice of spiritual discipline.

O Ramaji, King Brahmadatta, who was equal to Indra in glory wedded the princesses one by one by taking their hands in his. Through the touch of his hand, the princesses were freed from their deformity and restored to their former beauty. When King Kushnabha beheld his daughters released from their disfigurement and restored to their former beauty he was filled with joy.

Thus did the King Kushnabha give his daughters in marriage to King Brahmadatta and then commanded their preceptors to accompany them to the court of his son-in-law.

Somada was delighted with the union of her son to the damsels and receiving them with great affection, commended the virtuous King Kushanabha.

CHAPTER 34

His son, Gadhi, is the father of Vishwamitra

" O RAMAJI, after the wedding of his daughters, the sinless King Kushanabha prepared to perform a sacrifice in order to obtain a son.

"At the inauguration of the sacrifice, the munificent King Kusha, son of Shri Brahma, said to Kushanabha : ' O my Son, thou wilt obtain a son like thyself, he should be named Gadhi, he will bring thee immortal renown.'

"After some time a son was born to the wise King Kushanabha who was a lover of virtue, and his name was Gadhi. This Gadhi, O Rama, was my virtuous father[1] and because I was born in the family of Kusha I was called Kaushika.

" I had, O Prince, an elder sister named Satyavati, who became the faithful spouse of Richika. When her lord died, she ascended to heaven and took the form of the Kaushiki river. The river is sacred and beautiful, and its waters confer merit on men. To bless the world Satyavati became the river flowing near the Himalayas.

[1] The Rishi Vishwamitra is still speaking here.

" O Prince, through love of my sister, I dwell on the banks of the Kaushiki river near the Himalayas.

" Established in truth, faithful to her lord, that sister of mine, named Satyavati is to-day the river Kaushiki, great among streams and highly fortunate.

" O Rama, in order to perform a sacrifice, I went to the Siddha ashrama, I have now accomplished my purpose.

" O Rama, at thy instance, I have told thee of my family and origin ; the night is far spent in listening to this tale, now rest, so that, refreshed, we may resume our journey to-morrow. Peace be with thee !

" The leaves of the trees are motionless, the birds and beasts are silent and darkness covers all. How imperceptibly the evening has passed away. The sky is brilliant with stars, as if a thousand eyes gazed down on us.

" The bright moon with its cool beams, slowly rising higher and higher dispels the darkness. Nocturnal wanderers and the terrible flesh-eating yakshas prowl about here and there."

Having uttered these words, the great Sage Vishwamitra became silent. The other munis praised him saying : " Well spoken, well spoken, O Sage."

They said : " The dynasty of Kusha has ever practised righteousness and the kings of this line have been eminent in virtue. Of this dynasty, thou, O Vishwamitra, art the most illustrious, the fame of this royal line has been enhanced by the beautiful river Kaushiki."

Thus did the great sages praise the Rishi Vishwamitra, who then withdrew to rest, as the sun sets behind a mountain.

Shri Ramachandra and his brother Lakshmana, full of wonder also made obeisance to the holy sage and retired to sleep.

CHAPTER 35

Vishwamitra begins to narrate the origin of the holy river Gunga

HAVING passed the night with the other munis on the banks of the river Shona, Shri Vishwamitra said to Prince Rama at daybreak: "Arise, O Prince, the day has dawned, may prosperity attend thee! Perform thy morning devotions and let us prepare for our journey."

Shri Rama listened to the instructions of the holy sage, recited his morning prayers and prepared to leave, saying: "O Knower of God, the waters of the holy river Shona appear to be very shallow and rest on a sandy bed, be pleased to instruct us where we should cross over it."

The sage replied: "O Prince, I will show thee where the great rishis traversed it." Thereafter they forded the river and journeyed on and on, enjoying the many beautiful woods and forests through which they passed.

After proceeding a great distance, late one afternoon, they reached the holy river Ganges, beloved of the sages. On beholding the lovely river rendered beautiful by the presence of swans and cranes, Rama, Lakshmana and the sages were filled with delight.

They halted on the banks and bathed in the sacred river as prescribed by the holy ordinance, then lighting their sacrificial fires they partook of the remains of the offerings. According to the tradition, they offered water to their ancestors and spreading coverings, seated themselves by the holy Ganges.

Sitting in the midst of the sages with the two princes before him, Shri Vishwamitra was questioned by Shri Rama in the following manner:—

"O Lord, I desire to hear the story of this holy river, which traverses the three paths.[1] How does the sacred Gunga, passing through the three worlds merge at last in the ocean?"

[1] In Hindu mythology the universe is divided into the three worlds: Bhur, Bhuvah, Swah, the lower, middle and upper worlds. The sacred river is said to traverse all three.

On this request, Shri Vishwamitra began to narrate the origin and genesis of the sacred river.

" O Rama, the great Himavat, Lord of the Himalayas, the treasury of all precious metals, had two daughters, who were unsurpassed in loveliness on earth. Their mother Mena, the wife of Himachala (Himavat) was the daughter of Mount Meru. Her elder daughter was named Gunga and the younger Uma.

" The devas wishing to observe certain sacred rites, asked for Shri Gunga to promote the success of their undertaking and with the permission of her father, took her away with them.

" Himachala, mindful of the good of all beings, gave his daughter Gunga, the purifier of the whole world, to the gods, thinking it to be his duty to do so. The gods supremely gratified took his daughter Gunga and blessing all, left Himachala.

" O Prince of the House of Raghu, the other daughter of Himachala, named Uma, practised great asceticism, considering it to be her chief wealth. Himachala gave this ascetic daughter Uma, who was venerated by the whole world, to Shri Mahadeva[1] in marriage, thinking him to be a worthy consort.

" O Rama, now I have told thee of the two daughters of Himachala, revered by the whole world, the river Gunga and Uma Devi.

" O my Son, O Chief of Disciples, I have related to thee the story of Shri Gunga accompanying the devas to heaven. This beautiful daughter of the King of Himalaya, once resident in heaven, is the charming river Gunga, whose waters destroy all sin."

CHAPTER 36

The story of the king of Himalayas' younger daughter Uma

HEARING the wonderful narrative, so eloquently related by Shri Vishwamitra, both the princes praised the holy sage and said: " O Divine Sage, thou hast told us a tale, by the hearing of

[1] Mahadeva—A title of the Lord Shiva.

which great merit is acquired, be gracious enough to enlighten us further regarding the elder daughter of the King of Himalaya. Thou art omniscient, therefore describe to us fully, how the Gunga, the world purifying stream, came down from heaven to earth. O Thou, versed in the science of dharma, why is this sacred river called Tripathaga (the Traverser of the Three Worlds) and whence is this name derived ? "

Seated amidst the other sages, Shri Vishwamitra, whose only wealth was truth and austerity, spoke as follows, in answer to Shri Rama's questioning :—

" O Prince, in ancient times, the holy Lord Mahadeva was wedded to Parvati[1] and being charmed with her beauty devoted himself to the delights of connubial bliss. According to the measure of time of the gods, the Lord Mahadeva passed a hundred years with that devi[2] but remained without issue. In their anxiety, the gods approached Shri Brahma and said :—

" ' Who will be able to endure the power and glory of the offspring produced by these two mighty beings ? '

" They then took refuge with Shri Mahadeva, saying : ' O God of Gods, O Mahadeva, ever engaged in doing good to all beings, we offer salutations to thee, be gracious unto us ! Thy power, O First among the Gods, none can endure, therefore with this goddess engage in yogic penances. For the welfare of the three worlds, retain thine energy within thy body so that the universe may be preserved and may not suffer destruction '."

The Ruler of the World, Shri Mahadeva, listened to the words of the devas and said : " Be it so, O Devas, I will restrain my power so that all the regions including the earth may dwell in peace, but O Devas, should my vital fluid overflow, who shall receive it ? "

The gods answered Shri Mahadeva, saying : " Let the earth receive it."

Then Shri Mahadeva let fall his seed on the earth covering the mountains, seas and forests. When the earth could bear no more, the devas asked the wind and fire deities to combine

[1] Parvati—The consort of the Lord Shiva.

[2] Devi—another name for Parvati. Devi literally means goddess or shining one.

with that creative power and thus was a white mountain created and later a heavenly forest as resplendent as the light of the sun. From this fiery light was born the glorious Swami Karttikeya.[1]

"All the gods and rishis were full of joy and adored the Lord Shiva and the goddess Uma. As they worshipped them with grateful hearts, Uma was filled with wrath and said: 'O Devas, your action has filled me with displeasure, you shall not escape the consequences.'

"Then Uma shining like the sun, took water in the palm of her hand and pronounced a curse on the gods, saying: 'O Devas, you have prevented me from bearing a son, may you be childless from this day, may your wives be without progeny.'

"Still not appeased, Uma cursed the earth also and said: 'O Earth, thou shalt never remain in one form, thou shalt have many masters. O Witless One, thou shalt never bear a son, since thou hast prevented me from becoming a mother.'

"Shri Mahadeva, seeing the devas discomfited, prepared to depart to the northern region of the Himalayas. There, on a peak named Himavatprabhava, he engaged in prolonged yogic practices together with Uma.

"O Rama, I have told thee of one of the two daughters of the Himalayas; now with Lakshmana, listen to the tale of the other daughter of Himalaya, named Gunga."

CHAPTER 37

The king's elder daughter, Gunga

WHILST Shri Mahadeva was engaged in yogic meditation, the devas, under the leadership of Agni, went to the region of Brahma where, with Indra, they paid reverence to the Lord of the world, and said: "O Lord, at the beginning of creation thou did'st make Shri Mahadeva our leader, but he has now retired to the Himalayas and is engaged in the practice of austerity with Uma. O Thou who art desirous of the good

[1] Karttikeya—The God of War.

of the world, do what thou considerest ought to be done, thou art our only refuge."

Then Shri Brahma encouraged the devas, with gentle words, saying: "O Devas, the curse of Uma Devi, that you should remain without offspring is irrevocable, but the fire god Agni will cause Gunga to bear a son who will destroy the enemies of the gods. The youngest daughter of Himanchala (Uma) will look upon her sister's son as her own and will inevitably lavish her affection on him."

"O Rama, the words of Shri Brahma filled the gods with satisfaction and they offered obeisance to him. Then they all circumambulated Mount Kailasha,[1] the repository of precious metals, and begged Agni to beget a son.

"Agni acquiesced in their request and approaching Shri Gunga, said: 'O Devi, let us beget a son for it is the wish of the gods.'

"Assuming the form of a celestial nymph, Gunga, inspired the fire god to plant his seed in her, her every vein being filled with splendour. After a time, she addressed Agni, saying: 'O Deva, I am unable to bear the ever-increasing splendour which thou hast communicated to me. My body is burning like fire, my mind is agitated and I am filled with fear.'

"Agni replied: 'O Sinless One, place this foetus near the Himalayas.'

"Then Gunga Devi expelled the resplendent being, shining like gold. This substance, falling on the earth, became the purest gold that can be found. All objects in its proximity became silver and the more distant areas exposed to its penetrating rays became copper, the baser parts becoming zinc and lead. In this way, its brilliance was transmuted into metals and spread abroad and the mountains and forests near by were changed to gold. O Rama, gold being produced in that dazzling form is called jatarupa (form-born) and, O Hero, that is why gold shines like fire. The grass, the creepers, the shrubs, all were converted into gold, and from that splendour was born Kumara.

"The devas with Indra engaged the Krittikas[2] to nurse the

[1] Mount Kailasha—said to be the abode of Lord Shiva.
[2] Krittikas—The Pleiades, the six nurses of the God of War.

child and they regarded him as their own son. The gods named the child Karttikeya and said: 'He shall be our son and he will be renowned in the three worlds.'

" The Krittikas bathed the child and as he grew, his form resembled the fire. Because the infant was born prematurely, the devas called him Skanda.

" The nurses began to nourish the child with milk and he shone like a flame. With six mouths he sucked the milk of six nurses at the same time. Soon he grew so powerful that while yet an infant he challenged groups of demons to combat. Then all the gods appointed him their commander-in-chief. The Devas and Agni paid affectionate homage to this child.

" O Rama, this is the inspiring and merit-bestowing story of Shri Gunga and Karttikeya.

" O Raghava, on this earth, those who read this narrative with faith and devotion shall have long lives, sons and grandsons and obtain the divine region of Skanda."

CHAPTER 38

The story of King Sagara, Shri Rama's ancestor

SHRI VISHWAMITRA in gentle accents, related this story to Shri Ramachandra, and then again addressed him, saying :—

" In ancient times there lived a king named Sagara, who ruled in Ayodhya. He was brave and virtuous and a lover of his subjects, yet he was without issue.

" The name of his chief queen was Keshini, a daughter of King Vidharba; she was virtuous and truthful. His second queen was Sumati, a daughter of Arishtanemi and she was comely and charming.

" The king went to the Himalayas and engaged in severe yogic practices in the forest of Bhrigu-prasravana. When he had completed a hundred years' ascetic practices, the ever truthful Maharishi Bhrigu was pleased with him and favoured

him with a boon. He said: 'O Sinless King, thou shalt beget many sons and thy fame will be immeasurable. From one of thy queens shall be born one son, and from the other sixty thousand sons.'

"When the queens heard of the boon granted by the rishi, they approached him saying: 'O Knower of God, we are certain that thy boon will bear fruit, please tell us therefore which of us will beget one son and which sixty thousand?'

"Hearing their words, the highly virtuous Bhrigu said: 'That depends on your desires. Tell me, which of you would fain be the mother of the founder of the dynasty and which desires to beget sixty thousand illustrious sons?'

"O Rama, Queen Keshini desired to be favoured by one son only, but Sumati, the sister of Garuda[1] obtained the boon of bearing sixty thousand powerful and illustrious sons.

"O Prince, the king offered salutations to the Rishi Bhrigu and with his consorts returned to the capital.

"When the time was ripe, the chief Queen Keshini gave birth to a son who was called Asamanjasa.

"O Great One, a gourd was brought forth by Queen Sumati from which, when opened, sixty thousand male infants emerged. The nurses placed them in jars full of butter and tended them. After a long time they attained to the state of adolescence, and then grew to manhood.

"O Rama, the eldest son of King Sagara, Asamanjasa used to seize hold of children and throw them into the river Sarayu. When he saw them drowning, he rejoiced. This evil doer grew up to oppress the good by his conduct.

"The citizens of King Sagara's capital exiled the prince, thus passing judgment on him. Asamanjasa became the father of a valiant prince named Anshuman, who was esteemed by everyone and addressed every man with courtesy.

"After a long time, King Sagara resolved to perform a sacrifice. O Rama, the king summoning the high priests began the initiatory rites."

[1] Garuda—a mythological bird, half man, half bird, the vehicle of Shri Vishnu, and the slayer of serpents. Garuda is said to have stolen the nectar of immortality from the gods, when it was churned from the ocean.

CHAPTER 39

The horse with which he performs a sacrifice is stolen

HAVING listened to this tale, Shri Rama addressed the Muni Vishwamitra, who resembled the fire in splendour, and said: " O Wise One, may prosperity constantly attend thee! I desire to hear how my ancestor King Sagara performed the sacrifice."

Shri Vishwamitra, highly gratified by Shri Rama's eager enquiry, smilingly replied: " Listen, O Rama, to the history of the high-souled King Sagara. There is a country between the Himalayas and the Vindhya mountains, and it was there that King Sagara performed his sacrifice. That land is suitable for this purpose, O Great Prince.

" The great archer and warrior Anshuman was appointed the protector of the horse released for the sacrifice. A rakshasa in disguise, stole the horse and when it was being borne away, the priests approached the king, crying: ' See, someone is carrying off the horse, kill the thief and restore it.' The king called for his sixty thousand sons and said: 'A wicked demon has stolen the sacrificial steed, in what direction has he borne it away? It has been consecrated by mantrams to avoid obstructions; seek the horse, my sons, and may success attend you. Scour the earth surrounded by the seas, and excavate the earth at my command, till the sacred horse is found. Having taken the initiation, I cannot leave this place. Go Ye, My Sons! I shall remain here with Anshuman and the brahmins.'

" O Rama, commanded by their father, those powerful princes joyfully started in search of the horse. O Great One! they ranged the world in vain and began to dig the ground with their nails which were as sharp as diamonds.

" O Prince of the House of Raghu, they used ploughs, spades and other implements to excavate the ground and the earth shook with the sound. While ploughing up the earth, many snakes, demons and powerful titans were slain and injured.

" O Raghava, those mighty princes pierced the earth to the depth of sixty thousand miles and reached the antipodes. Having

pierced the earth with its mountains, they searched for the horse in Jambudwipa.[1]

" The devas, gandharvas, asuras and nagas became agitated, and approached Shri Brahma ; bowing before him with their minds afflicted and in great distress, they said : ' O Blessed Lord, the sons of the Maharajah Sagara are digging up the whole earth and they have brought about the death of many great beings. Whosoever opposes them is slain with the words, " Thou art a thief, thou hast stolen the sacrificial horse " '."

CHAPTER 40

The king's sons search for the horse ; they accuse Shri Kapila of stealing it and are reduced to ashes

" The grandsire Shri Brahma, hearing the words of the gods regarding the sons of King Sagara, who were already doomed, said :—

" ' O Devas, this whole world belongs to the glorious Vasudeva[2] and he, in the form of the Sage Kapila, supports it. These princes will fall victims to the wrath of holy Kapila ; the earth is eternal and cannot be destroyed.' The gods, hearing these words, returned to their own regions, full of joy.

" Meanwhile, the uproar caused by the sons of Sagara digging the earth resembled the crash of thunder.

" Having encompassed the whole world, they returned to their father and said : ' We have traversed the whole world and have slain gods, demons and snakes, but we have found no trace of the sacrificial horse nor of the thief. O Father, may prosperity attend thee, be pleased to reflect on the matter and give us further instructions.'

" The great monarch replied in anger : ' Go, dig the earth once more, capture the horse, accomplish your purpose, then return.'

[1] Jambudwipa—one of the seven continents of which the world was made up.
[2] Vasudeva—a name of Vishnu.

" In accordance with the command of their royal sire, the princes once more renewed their tunnelling and came upon the monstrous form of a great elephant which resembled a mountain.

" O Prince of Raghu, the whole earth and the mountains of that quarter are supported by that elephant Vimpaksha, and whenever, from fatigue, he moves his feet to ease himself, the whole world trembles and quakes.

" The princes bowed down to him and circumambulated him. They then continued digging deeper and deeper, first to the east, then to the west. To the south they saw the second great elephant whose name was Mahapadma. They beheld him supporting that quarter of the earth and were astonished; they offered him salutations.

" O Prince, the sons of King Sagara next dug the northern quarter of the earth and saw there a white elephant which resembled a heap of snow. His name was Hima-Pandara and his form was gigantic; they worshipped him as he stood supporting that quarter of the earth.

" Then with furious zeal, those mighty and valiant sons of Sagara dug the earth and proceeded to that renowned quarter where they saw Kapila the eternal Lord Vasudeva and the horse grazing near him.

" O Rama, they were glad, thinking that it was Shri Kapila who had stolen the horse. Full of wrath, seizing ploughs, trees, rocks and stones, they ran towards him, crying: ' Thou art the stealer of the sacrificial horse, thou art the thief. O Wicked One, we, the sons of King Sagara, have found thee.'

" O Rama, Shri Kapila, hearing these words, filled with rage, uttered the sound ' H'm ' and instantly by his immeasurable power all the sons of Sagara were reduced to ashes."

CHAPTER 41

King Sagara's grandson, Anshuman, finds the horse and the ashes of his uncles. He is told the funeral rites must be performed with the waters of the holy river Gunga

" O RAMACHANDRA, perceiving that a long period had elapsed since the departure of his sons, King Sagara spoke to his powerful and resplendent grandson Anshuman :

" ' O Child, thou art valiant, learned and illustrious like thine ancestors, go and seek thine uncles and the stealer of the horse also. The interior of the earth is inhabited by the most mighty beings, arm thyself therefore with sword, bow and arrows. Pay reverence to those worthy to be worshipped whom thou dost encounter on the way and make obeisance to them ; slay those who obstruct thy purpose, then successful, return and ensure the completion of the sacrifice.'

" Thus instructed by his grandfather, Prince Anshuman, arming himself with sword, bow and arrows, speedily departed. Honoured on the way by devas, danavas, asuras and nagas, pisachas, birds and serpents, he came to the mighty and resplendent elephant and worshipped him, enquiring as to his welfare. The elephant said in reply : ' O Prince Anshuman, thou wilt accomplish thy purpose and soon return to the capital.'

" The prince proceeded further and enquired in the same manner of each of the other great elephants. They all advised the prince, who had paid due respect to them, to proceed further. As instructed by them, Anshuman came to the place where the heaped ashes of his uncles' bodies were lying. Overcome with grief, Anshuman wept to see that death had overtaken them. Afflicted with distress and pain, he suddenly perceived the sacrificial horse grazing near by. Desirous of offering the rite of water for his departed relatives, he looked round but could find no water anywhere. Extending his gaze, he saw his maternal uncle, the holy eagle, who addressed the prince as follows :—

" ' O Lion among men, grieve not, these princes have met the death they deserved. They have been consumed to ashes

by the Mahatma Kapila of unimaginable glory. O Wise One, it is not meet to offer the usual rites for them. O Great One, perform the rites with the water of the holy river Gunga, the Daughter of Himalaya. When the waters of the purifier of the world, the sacred Gunga flow over their ashes, the ceremony will be crowned with success and the sixty thousand princes will be received into heaven '."

The illustrious and mighty Prince Anshuman listened to the words of Shri Garuda and speedily returning with the horse, approached King Sagara, who still awaited the completion of the initiatory rites; he related to him all that the eagle had said. The monarch completed the sacrifice and returned to his capital considering the means whereby he might cause Shri Gunga to descend to earth; but in vain.

King Sagara, unable to devise any way to accomplish this matter, having ruled for thirty thousand years, departed hence.

CHAPTER 42

Anshuman's son, Dilipa, fails and his son Bhagiratha performs austerities to induce the holy river to descend

AFTER his death, the ministers installed the virtuous Anshuman as king. O Rama, glorious was the reign of King Anshuman. He was succeeded by his son, the world-renowned Dilipa.

King Anshuman, leaving his kingdom to Dilipa, retired to the top of a Himalayan peak and began to perform severe yogic austerities. Having passed thirty-two thousand years in this wise, without inducing the sacred river Gunga to descend on earth, he gave up his life.

Acquainted with the fate of his great uncles, and overcome with grief, the mighty sovereign Dilipa found no means of bringing the sacred stream down to earth. Consumed with anxiety, he reflected daily on how he should accomplish the descent of the Gunga and perform the funeral rites for the deliverance of the souls of his ancestors. The righteous and

illustrious King Dilipa, constantly engaged in these reflections, was then blessed with the birth of a virtuous son, Bhagiratha.

The renowned monarch Dilipa observing many sacrifices, ruled over his kingdom for thirty thousand years ; his thoughts were ever devoted to the deliverance of the souls of his forbears until stricken with disease, he was claimed by death. Having bequeathed the kingdom to his son Bhagiratha, his spirit ascended to the region of Indra.

O Rama, Bhagiratha was a virtuous and royal sage, but he had no heir and was desirous of obtaining a son. O Raghava, he entrusted the administration of his kingdom to his ministers and proceeded to the holy place named Gokarna where he practised yogic penances to attract the descent of the holy Gunga. With arms uplifted and senses controlled, he stood in the midst of five fires in the hottest season, partaking of food once a month only, and continued thus for a thousand years.

O Mighty Prince, after a thousand years, Shri Brahma, the Lord and Ruler of the world, was pleased with Bhagiratha and, accompanied by the devas, approached the high-souled king and said :

" O Bhagiratha, thy virtuous yogic practices have elicited our admiration ; ask for a boon, O Fortunate One."

The highly resplendent Bhagiratha, with joined palms submissively addressed Shri Brahma, saying : " O Blessed Lord, if thou art pleased to confer the fruits of mine austerities on me and grant me a boon, then allow me to deliver the souls of the sons of King Sagara by offering them water at their funeral rites, from the sacred stream. O Lord, do thou also grant as a further boon that the Dynasty of Ikshwaku may be preserved and I may have an heir."

The Grandsire of the whole world listened to the prayer of the Maharajah Bhagiratha and answered him in gentle and pleasing accents :—

" O Mighty King Bhagiratha, thou hast asked a great boon, may success attend thee ! Let thy desire for a son be fulfilled. O King, when the Gunga, the eldest daughter of Himalaya falls on the earth with overwhelming power, the earth will not be

able to sustain her; none but the Lord Shiva can accomplish this."

Having uttered these words to King Bhagiratha and having spoken to Shri Gunga also, Shri Brahma returned with the gods to his own region.

CHAPTER 43

Lord Shiva lets loose the sacred river which follows King Bhagiratha's celestial chariot

SHRI BRAHMA having departed, the King Bhagiratha, standing on the tip of one toe, adored Shri Shiva for a full year. O Mighty One, with arms uplifted, living on air, unsupported, fixed like a pillar, day and night King Bhagiratha offered his adorations to the Lord.

A full year having passed, the Lord of Uma, Shri Mahadeva, who is adored by the whole world, spoke to King Bhagiratha as follows: "O Great One, I am pleased with thee, I will accomplish what thou desirest, I will receive the descent of Gunga on my head."

Then the holy Gunga, the eldest daughter of Himalaya, the object of reverence to the whole world, assuming the form of a mighty river, descended with torrential force on to the head of Shiva. The goddess reflected within herself that she would bear down the Lord Mahadeva to the antipodes. Shri Shiva, reading her thoughts, grew angry and determined to detain the mighty stream in his hair. Resembling the majestic Himalayas, the locks of Shri Shiva held the falling Gunga fast and the sacred river remained imprisoned there. For innumerable years the Gunga wandered round and round in the locks of Shri Mahadeva and could not find an egress.

O Rama, when Shri Bhagiratha did not see the holy stream descending to earth, he again began his penance in order to propitiate the Lord of the world.

Then Shri Shiva let loose the Gunga in the Brindusara lake

and as it fell it divided itself into seven streams. The three branches conferring prosperity, Hladini, Pavani and Nalini, flowed towards the east from the head of holy Shiva.

Then the sacred Gunga of pure and delightful water was divided into three further branches, Suchakshu, Sita and Sindhav, all flowing towards the west. The seventh of these streams followed the chariot of the Maharajah Bhagiratha.

The royal sage, riding in a beautiful chariot, went forward and the sacred river Gunga followed him.

Thus did the holy river descend from heaven on to the forehead of Shri Mahadeva and from thence came to the surface of the earth.

The fall of the sacred stream created a mighty reverberation, her waters flowing through beautiful ways. Riding their aerial chariots as large as cities, containing elephants and horses, the gods, sages, celestial musicians, yakshas and siddhas in great numbers, came to witness the holy Ganges falling from heaven to earth. In their aerial chariots named Pariplava, the gods came to see this wonderful event of the holy river flowing on the earth, and as they descended from the skies, the splendour of their celestial ornaments irradiated the cloudless canopy of heaven as if a thousand suns had risen there.

The mercurial fishes and aquatic creatures leaping from the stream thrown up by the force of the current, shone like lightning in the sky, whilst the foam and spray scattered on all sides resembled flocks of swans in flight or clouds in winter.

The waters of the holy Gunga sometimes rose high in the air, sometimes flowed tortuously, sometimes broadened out, sometimes dashed against the rocks and sometimes spouted upwards afterwards falling to the ground; that pure water capable of removing sin looked delightful flowing on the surface of the earth.

Then the celestial sages and heavenly musicians and the denizens of the earth, reverently touched that sacred stream falling from the locks of Shiva.

Those beings, who through a curse, had fallen from the heavenly regions and been made to dwell on earth, were cleansed of their transgressions by bathing in the holy Gunga. Purified and freed from their sins, those resplendent beings returned to the heavenly regions, passing through the sky.

Wherever the sacred Ganges flowed, people were cleansed of their sins by bathing in its waters.

King Bhagiratha, riding a celestial chariot, drove on and Shri Gunga followed after him.

O Rama, the gods, the sages, rakshasas, asuras, yakshas, the chief serpents and nymphs following King Bhagiratha, together with the aquatic beings and swans, attended the sacred river. Whichever course King Bhagiratha took, that mighty river Gunga, the Destroyer of all sin, followed. Flowing on and on, Shri Gunga arrived where the Sage Jahnu, worker of miracles, was performing a sacrifice. Then the sacred river swept over the sacrificial pavilion and all it contained. The Rishi Jahnu perceiving the pride of Gungaji, grew angry and drank up the whole of the water of that river, verily a great miracle!

The devas, gandharvas and sages were astonished and began to worship that Mahatma Jahnu, saying, "From to-day the holy river shall be called thy daughter". The mighty Jahnu being pleased, let loose the river through his ears. From thence Shri Gunga is called Jahnavi (the daughter of Jahnu). Thereafter she once again flowed behind the chariot of King Bhagiratha. Finally, the holy Gunga reached the sea and entered the lower regions to fulfil the purpose of the king.

The royal Sage Bhagiratha attended by the sacred river, gazed with grief on the ashes of his ancestors. O Prince of the House of Raghu, as soon as the holy stream touched the ashes, the sons of King Sagara were resuscitated, freed from sin, and attained the celestial region.

CHAPTER 44

King Bhagiratha completes the funeral rites for his ancestors

When the king attended by the holy Gunga, reached the seashore, he entered the subterranean region where the sons of King Sagara had been burnt to ashes.

"O Rama, as the holy water flowed over the ashes, Shri Brahma the Lord of all the worlds, addressed King Bhagiratha as follows: 'O Great King, thou hast redeemed the sixty thousand sons of King Sagara, who now dwell in the heavenly region. O King, as long as the waters of the sea continue on earth, so long shall the sons of King Sagara in celestial form enjoy heaven. Henceforth, O Great Sovereign, Shri Gunga shall be thy eldest daughter and be known by thy name throughout the earth. This sacred river shall be named Shri Gunga, Tripathaga[1] and Bhagirathi.

"'O King, perform the funeral rites of thine ancestors and fulfil thy prescribed duty. The mighty King Sagara was not able to accomplish this purpose and King Anshuman of limitless prowess also failed to obtain the fulfilment of his devout desire. Thy father Dilipa, equal to ourselves in merit and a warrior fully established in the duties of his caste, that illustrious Dilipa besought the holy Gunga to descend to earth in vain. This great design has been accomplished by thee alone. Thou hast acquired undying renown throughout the world.

"'By achieving this, thou art possessed of the highest dharma. O Great Sovereign, now do thou bathe in the holy stream also. O Lion among men, purify thyself and acquire merit, then perform the funeral rites of thine ancestors. O King, may prosperity attend thee, return to thy capital, I shall now ascend to my own abode.'

"The mighty and illustrious Brahma then ascended to heaven and the royal Sage Bhagiratha, having performed the obsequies of the sons of King Sagara, with the water of the sacred Ganges, returned to his capital.

"Enjoying every felicity, King Bhagiratha began to govern once more and his people rejoiced that he had again assumed rulership. All were freed from suffering and anxiety and they increased in wealth and prosperity.

"O Rama, I have narrated the story of the descent of Shri Gunga fully to thee. May prosperity attend thee! Dusk has fallen and the hour of the evening prayer has come. This story gives wealth, prosperity, fame, longevity, sons, and residence

[1] Tripathaga—three way going.

in heaven to the reader. He who causes it to be heard by others whether he be a brahmin or a kshatriya, brings joy to his ancestors and the gods.

"O Ramachandra, he who with fixed attention listens to this story, shall obtain all he desires, his sins will be remitted and he will obtain long life and renown."

CHAPTER 45

Vishwamitra begins to relate the story of the city of Vishala and the churning of the ocean, which leads to the combat between the devas and the daityas

SHRI RAMACHANDRA and Shri Lakshmana were filled with astonishment on hearing the words of Shri Vishwamitra, and said to him: "O Holy Sage, marvellous indeed is the history of King Sagara and the descent of the Ganges, which thou hast related to us."

The night drew on as they had been listening to the story, and Shri Rama and Lakshmana passed the remaining hours meditating on the matter.

The clear day dawned and Shri Rama, having performed his daily devotions, said to Shri Vishwamitra: "The night has passed in listening to this divine narrative, it has slipped away, as if it were a moment. Now let us cross the sacred and merit-giving stream reflecting on its marvellous origin. Knowing thee to have come, the other sages have sent a boat in preparation for crossing the holy river."

Shri Vishwamitra summoned the ferryman and with the princes and sages all were conveyed to the other side. They rested awhile on the opposite bank and entertained the sages in their company. In the distance, they saw the city named Vishala and soon the great Rishi Vishwamitra with the princes reached that place of beauty, which resembled one of Indra's cities.

Then Rama, full of wisdom, approached the holy sage and

humbly made enquiry concerning the city. He said: "O Great Sage, what royal and illustrious house rules here? I desire to hear."

At these words of Rama, the holy sage began to relate the story of the city as follows:—

"O Rama, attend! I will tell thee the story of this city, which I heard from Indra.

"In the golden age (Satya Yuga) Diti[1] gave birth to a powerful son Daitya, an asura, and Aditi[1] gave birth to the highly fortunate and exceedingly righteous son Devata, a celestial being. These two sagacious beings sought to become immortal, incorruptible and free from disease, old age and other ills. After reflecting on this matter, they resolved to churn Kshiroda (the ocean of milk) and obtain from it the water of immortality. Using the mighty snake Vasuki as a rope and the Mandara mountain as the churn, they began to churn the ocean. When they had done so for a thousand years, the snake Vasuki bit the rocks with its teeth and threw up venom. From this was produced the great poison which began to consume men, gods, demons and the whole world.

"The gods took refuge with the Lord Shiva and worshipped him crying 'Protect us, protect us'. Attracted by the mournful cry of the gods, Shri Mahadeva and Shri Hari[3] appeared there with conch and disc.

"Shri Vishnu[3] smilingly addressed the bearer of the trident, Shri Mahadeva, and said: 'O Lord, thou art the chief of the gods and should'st, therefore, accept whatever is first produced by the churning of the ocean. Receive the poison as thy gift, the first tribute.'

"Having spoken thus, Shri Vishnu disappeared, and the Blessed Lord Shiva, moved by the distress of the gods and the words of Shri Vishnu, drank the dreadful poison, as if it were nectar, and returned to Kailasha.

"O Prince of Raghu, the devas and the daityas began churning once more, but the churning staff began to sink. Then the devas and gandharvas praised the Lord Vishnu, saying: 'O

[1] Diti—a goddess, mother of the titans, daityas.
[2] Aditi—a goddess, denoting "infinity", mother of the gods, adityas.
[3] Shri Hari—another title of the Lord Vishnu.

Blessed Lord, Thou art the Master of all beings, thou art the asylum of the gods—protect us all, O Great Lord, and support the sinking Mandara mountain.'

" Shri Vishnu, assuming the form of a tortoise, entered the ocean and supported the mountain on his back. Taking hold of the peak in his hand, the blessed Vishnu churned the ocean, standing between the devas and the asuras.

"After a thousand years, Shri Dhanwantari,[1] the teacher of the Ayur Veda appeared, holding a staff and loshta in his hands; thereafter many nymphs emerged. O Raghava, they were called apsaras, 'ap' meaning water and 'yara' to 'emerge from'; on this account these beautiful damsels were named 'apsaras.' O Rama, they numbered six hundred million and their female attendants were innumerable. None were received either by the devas or the daityas, hence they remained without a lord.

" Then, O Prince, Varuni,[2] the daughter of the god Varuna[2] was born. The sons of Aditi did not accept her, but the asuras gladly did so. Those who rejected her were called suras[3] (devas) and those who received her became merry and were called asuras.

" O Raghava, then the celestial horse Uchchaihshravas and the jewel Kaustubha also rose out of the sea, and they were succeeded by the water of immortality.

" O Rama, the devas fought with the danavas[4] for possession of the nectar and the daityas allied themselves with the asuras in this struggle; terrible indeed was this combat.

"After many had lost their lives in the fight, Shri Vishnu assumed the form of Mohini, a charming woman the product of Maya[5] and stole the nectar from the combatants.

" Those who opposed the imperishable Vishnu were destroyed by him. In this conflict the gods slew countless daityas.[6] Indra, after slaying the asuras, became the king of the devas and with the help of the sages began to rule with joy."

[1] Dhanwantari—physician of the gods.
[2] Varuni—literally " wine ", the daughter of Varuna, the Lord of waters.
[3] Suras—another name for the gods.
[4] Danavas—Giants who warred against the gods.
[5] Maya—the indescribable, indefinable principle or power by which all creatures are deluded. (For further explanation refer to glossary.)
[6] Daityas—Titans.

CHAPTER 46

Diti undergoes severe austerities for the birth of a son

" O Rama, learning that her children had been slain, Diti was much afflicted and approached her husband Kasyapa[1] with the words: ' O Lord, by thy powerful sons, am I bereft of my children. I desire a son who will be able to destroy Indra, though to this end I must undergo great penance. Such austerities I will perform, if thou wilt grant me a son that is mighty, valorous, strong-willed and firm of purpose.'

" The holy sage answered the afflicted Diti saying: ' Be it so! Remain chaste for a thousand years, thou shalt then bear a son capable of destroying Indra. By my grace, thy child shall be the ruler of the three worlds.'

" Thus did the sage console Diti, and blessing her, departed to practise penance. Diti retired contentedly to the forest of Kushaplava and began to undergo severe austerities.

" Indra then, coming there, paid reverence to her and began to serve her with humility, supplying her with fire, kusha grass[2] and other necessities, massaging her body when she became weak from the severity of ascetic practices. O Rama, Indra served Diti for a thousand years less ten days.

" Then Diti joyfully addressed Indra saying: ' O Indra, thy father has promised to grant me a son after a thousand years penance. Thou shalt soon behold thy brother, whom I desire shall overcome thee. With him thou shalt share the three worlds and be happy, have no anxiety.'

" By this time the afternoon had come. Diti overcome with sleep, placing her feet where her head had lain, carelessly assumed an impure posture.

" Indra rejoiced and laughed aloud. Entering her body, he cut the foetus into seven pieces with his great mace. Diti's slumber was interrupted by the cry of the child in her womb.

[1] Kasyapa—a Vedic sage.
[2] Kusha grass—sacred grass used in religious ceremonies, a grass of long stalks and pointed leaves. (Desnostachya bipinnata.)

Indra said to it 'Do not weep', 'Do not weep', and again divided the child with his mace, despite Diti's cries, 'Do not destroy it, do not destroy it'.

"Then Indra paused in his murderous assault and with extreme humility addressed Diti saying 'O Diti, thou wast impure through sleeping with thy feet towards the head of the couch, thou did'st thus occupy an improper posture. I have, therefore, severed thine unborn child into seven parts, since he was to be the cause of my destruction. O Devi, pardon me'."

CHAPTER 47

The holy sage and the princes arrive at Vishala and are welcomed by King Pramati

KNOWING the foetus to be divided into seven parts, Diti was greatly perturbed and said to Indra :—

"Through my fault has this come to pass; O Indra, thou art in no wise guilty. This child being divided, for thy good and mine own, I declare that these seven shall become the protectors of the forty-nine winds. These seven sons of divine appearance shall be known as the Bala-kanda winds. Let one wander about in the region of Brahma, another in the region of Indra, and the third in space. Let the remaining four winds go anywhere under thy instructions; may they all be known by the name of Maruts, conferred on them by thee."

With joined palms, the thousand-eyed god Indra said in reply to Diti: "O Devi, it will assuredly come to pass as thou desireth. Thy sons shall wander about in the form of devas in the Tapovana forest."

Thus reconciled and fully satisfied the mother and son ascended to heaven.

Thus have I heard, O Rama! This is that Tapovana forest in which Indra formerly served his mother Diti. O Lion among Men, here a great city was founded by the righteous Prince Vishala, the son of King Ikswaku and Alambusa.

O Rama, the mighty son of Vishala was named Hemachandra, and his son was the renowned Suchandra. O Rama, the son of Suchandra was Dhumrashwa and his son was Srinjaya. The glorious Sahadeva was the son of Srinjaya and the son of Sahadeva was the highly virtuous Krishashwa.

The son of Krishashwa was Somadatta and his son was Kakustha. The most illustrious and invincible of warriors King Pramati the son of Kakustha, is the present ruler of Vishala.

By the grace of King Ikswaku all the rulers of Vishala are long lived, virtuous and mighty.

O Rama, let us pass the night here, and to-morrow we will wait upon King Janaka.

When the powerful King Pramati heard of Shri Vishwamitra's arrival in his kingdom, he went with his spiritual preceptor and relatives to welcome him.

With joined palms, they offered him due worship and enquired as to his welfare. The king said: " O Muni, to-day I am indeed fortunate that thou hast been gracious enough to visit my kingdom. None is more blessed than I."

CHAPTER 48

They come to Gautama's hermitage and Vishwamitra relates its story

KING PRAMATI having enquired as to the well-being of Shri Vishwamitra, said :—

" O Holy Sage, may the Lord protect those two youths; be gracious enough to tell me who they may be. These princes, equal to the gods in power, walking with the gait of an elephant, fearless as lions or bulls in combat, whose eyes resemble lotuses, who are armed with swords, bows and quivers, who rival the heavenly Aswins[1] in beauty and who, in the flower of their

[1] Aswins—celestial horsemen, twin sons of Surya, the sun, precursors of the dawn.

youth, appear like gods, visiting the earth. Why are they travelling on foot? Whose sons are they? Why are they come? Enhancing the earth as the sun and moon illumine the sky; their manner of address and bearing showing them to be kinsmen, why are these two heroes of high descent, bearing mighty weapons, found on this hard path? I long to hear."

Shri Vishwamitra related to the king the whole story of the visit to the Siddha Ashrama and the slaying of the asuras.

The king was highly gratified to meet the princes, and perceiving them to be virtuous, entertained them with the greatest respect. Shri Ramachandra and Lakshmana having received hospitality from King Pramati, passed the night there. The following day they left for Mithilapuri, the capital of King Janaka.

When they beheld the city at a distance, they cried out: "How beautiful, how beautiful it is!" Thereafter, finding a charming hermitage which was uninhabited, Rama enquired of the Rishi Vishwamitra as follows: "O Sage, how can it be that this beautiful hermitage is unfrequented? O Lord, tell us whose has been this hermitage?"

Shri Vishwamitra, chief among the eloquent, answered Rama, saying: "O Prince, hear the true story of this hermitage, I will relate to thee who was its author and how he cursed it in anger.

"O Rama, this place, a source of wonder even to the gods, belonged to the Rishi Gautama and resembled the abode of the celestials. Here with Ahalya, the sage practised Yoga for thousands of years.

"O Rama, one day, the sage having gone to a distant place, Indra, finding Ahalya alone, assumed his form, and said to her: 'O Fair One, I am overcome by desire, let us carry out our conjugal duty.'

"O Raghava, though Ahalya recognized Indra disguised as her lord, yet she acceded to his request. Then Ahalya addressed Indra saying: 'O Indra, I am highly gratified, now depart quickly, unobserved. O Chief of the gods, preserve me and thyself from Gautama.'

"Indra laughed and answered: 'O Thou of beautiful waist,

to-day I rejoice, I will now depart for my own region.' On this, he sought to leave the hut of Ahalya.

" O Rama, at that instant he observed the Rishi Gautama entering the hut and he became agitated and anxious. Seeing the holy sage unconquered by devas or danavas, endowed with the power of Yoga, drenched with holy water, shining like fire, holding the sacred fuel and kusha grass in his hands, Indra was terrified and grew pale.

" Shri Gautama perceiving Indra in his own guise and judging by his guilty looks that he was leaving his spouse having committed sin with her, cursed him saying :—

" ' O Wicked Wretch, assuming my form, thou hast committed this sinful act. Be thou impotent.' Cursed by the Rishi Gautama, Indra was instantly deprived of his manhood. Then the Sage Gautama cursed Ahalya also saying : ' Thou shalt remain immovable in this place for thousands of years, thy food the wind alone. Thou shalt be as dust, invisible to all creatures. When Rama, the son of Dasaratha visits this forest, then shalt thou be cleansed from thy sin. Having served him, O Deluded One without desire for personal gain, thou shalt be restored to me in thy present body.'

" Thus did the illustrious Gautama curse the wicked Ahalya and, abandoning the hermitage, began his yogic penances, on the beautiful peak of Himalaya, inhabited by siddhas."

CHAPTER 49

Shri Rama liberates Ahalya from Gautama's curse and departs for Mithila

DEPRIVED of his virility, Indra grew melancholy, and addressing Agni and the other gods, said : " By obstructing the ascetic practices of the Mahatma Gautama, who sought to usurp my power, I have verily served the purpose of the gods. Evoking his wrath, by causing him to curse me and denounce Ahalya,

I have robbed the rishi of his spiritual power, therefore, O Devas, O Divine Beings, help me now to recover my manhood."

Then the gods with Agni at their head, approached the pittris, kavyavahanas and other beings and said to them: "Indra has been deprived of his virility; this ram of yours is in full possession of its powers, allow us to graft the testicles of the ram on to Indra, we can compensate the ram in this wise—from to-day, let those who desire to propitiate you, offer the sacrifice of a castrated ram and receive the reward of great merit at your hands."

The pittris did as requested by Agni and grafted the testicles of the ram on to Indra. From that time, O Rama, they have accepted the sacrifice of a gelded ram.

This event proves the immeasurable power of the practices of the holy sage. Now let us enter his hermitage. O Rama, do thou liberate the unfortunate Ahalya, so that she may once more resume her nymph-like form."

Shri Rama accepted the command and entered the hermitage, preceded by the Sage Vishwamitra. There they beheld Ahalya, by virtue of her yogic practices. Unperceived by devas, asuras or men, it seemed as if Brahma had created her with his own hands as a great mistress of occult powers. Resembling the full moon veiled in mist or the reflection of the sun in water or a bright fire wreathed in smoke, by the curse of the Rishi Gautama she remained invisible and thus it was ordained she should remain till she beheld Shri Ramachandra and till that hour, none in the three worlds should look on her.

With the deepest reverence did Shri Rama and Lakshmana touch the feet of Ahalya and she, remembering the words of the Rishi Gautama fell down in devotion before them. Thereafter, she entertained them with due hospitality, as enjoined in the scriptures, while the two princes acknowledged the honour paid to them. At this moment a rain of flowers fell from the sky, scattered by the gods; heavenly musicians sang and celestial nymphs danced whilst all rejoiced and paid homage to Ahalya.

The illustrious Sage Gautama becoming aware of the matter through his divine powers, repaired to the hermitage and rejoiced to behold Ahalya restored to her former state. Re-united, they

both worshipped the glorious Rama and then resumed their spiritual life together.

Shri Rama, having accepted the homage offered to him, departed thence for Mithila.

CHAPTER 50

They are welcomed at the place of sacrifice by King Janaka

PRECEDED by Shri Vishwamitra, Shri Rama and Lakshmana came to the king's place of sacrifice. Beholding the sacrificial pavilion, they said to the holy sage: "How well has the great Janaka prepared for the sacrifice! O August Rishi, thousands of brahmins learned in the Vedas, from many lands, with hundreds of bullock carts transporting their possessions, can be seen here. O Holy Father, let us choose a place where thou mayest rest."

The Sage thereupon selected a place which was secluded and supplied with water.

Hearing of the arrival of Shri Vishwamitra, King Janaka, accompanied by his illustrious priest, Shri Shatananda, and many others, hastened to that place and humbly offered obeisance to the holy sage. Then the king placed the traditional gifts of water sweetened with honey[1] before him and he, accepting the gifts, enquired as to the king's welfare and further whether the sacrifice was proceeding without hindrance; he then duly inquired concerning the welfare of Shri Shatananda and other holy men in attendance on their sovereign.

The king received all with a cheerful countenance and with joined palms said to Shri Vishwamitra: "O August Lord, please be seated with the other great sages." Thus requested, they sat down, after which Janaka with his family priest, brahmins and counsellors occupied their places, the king seated in the midst of his ministers.

[1] Madhuparka—a mixture of curds, butter, honey and the milk of coconut—a traditional offering.

Having attended to the due placing of his guests, the illustrious sovereign said: "O Lord, to-day, by the grace of the gods, all the preparations for the sacrifice have been carried out, now by thine advent here I have acquired merit equal to the fruit of my sacrifice. Blessed am I that thou hast honoured the place of sacrifice with thy presence. O Divine Sage, the high priests have informed me that the sacrifice will be completed in the course of twelve days, the gods will then come to take their share; Thou, O Illustrious Lord, shalt behold them."

Having thus addressed the sage, the king again earnestly enquired of him, saying: "May prosperity attend thee! O Sage, who are these two illustrious princes, equalling the gods in power, whose bearing resembles the majesty of an elephant, or a lion, who are valiant and whose eyes are like lotuses, who are armed with swords, bows and quivers and whose beauty rivals the Aswini-Kumara, who are youthful and appear to have descended from heaven to earth like the gods? Have they come here on foot? Whose sons are they? They, whose eyes are wide set and who are armed with sacred weapons, who wear their hair like Karttikeya[1] and who captivate the hearts of men by their magnanimous and virtuous qualities? Surely they are come hither to exalt our hearts and add to the fame of our dynasty? Adorning the earth as the sun or moon adorn the sky, in stature and bearing resembling each other, O Great Sage, whose sons are they? Please tell me all!"

Hearing the words of King Janaka, Shri Vishwamitra said: "These are the sons of King Dasaratha."

He then told the king of their residence in the Siddha-Asrama and of the slaying of the demons, of their visit to Vishala and the rescue of Ahalya, also of their meeting with the Sage Gautama. Then he said: "Now have we come to see the great bow."

Having related all this to the king, the great muni became silent.

[1] Kartfikeya—the god of war; the hair was shaved on the crown and the two side pieces like crows' wings left at the side.

CHAPTER 51

Gautama's son, Shatananda, relates more of the story of the Sage Vishwamitra

HAVING heard the words of the wise Vishwamitra, Shri Shatananda, the eldest son of the Sage Gautama, resplendent by virtue of his practice of Yoga, was filled with wonder and delight and, beholding Shri Rama was astonished.

Seeing the two princes sitting at their ease, Shri Shatananda said to the Sage Vishwamitra: " O Holy Sage, was my mother, so long involved in the practice of austerity, shown by thee to Shri Ramachandra? O Illustrious One, did my mother entertain these two heroes worthy of adoration with fruits and those things she was able to obtain in the hermitage?

" O Holy Rishi, didst thou relate the story of the improper behaviour of Indra to my mother in bygone days, to Shri Ramachandra? O Holy One, by virtue of the advent of Shri Rama, did my mother obtain my father's favour once more? O Kaushika, did my father duly honour Shri Ramachandra and is this Illustrious One, having received the hospitality of my parents, really come hither? O Holy Sage, please tell me; when my tranquil-minded sire entered the hermitage, was he honoured by Shri Rama?"

Shri Vishwamitra, skilled in the art of converse and acquainted with the laws of rhetoric, answered Shri Shatananda saying:—

" O Great Muni, I did that which should be done, by speaking that which was proper to the occasion, and patiently listening to that which was spoken, recollecting my duty. As Jamadagni, who first cursed Renuka and was then reconciled to her, so has thy father shown favour to thy mother and received her again."

Hearing the words of Shri Vishwamitra, the great Shatananda addressed Shri Ramachandra, saying: " O Great One, may thy coming be the source of prosperity to all. It is fortunate indeed that thou didst visit my father's hermitage and restore my mother to her former state. How can I sufficiently praise that mighty Sage Shri Vishwamitra, reverenced by all the sages. O Rama, enlightened are his actions; by virtue of his

holy practices he has become a brahmarishi[1] though previously a royal sage. Among brahmarishis he is unique, he is known to me as one who is ever concerned with the good of all. O Rama, none is equal to thee on earth, since thou art protected by so great a sage as Vishwamitra. Hear while I relate the story of the great Kaushika[2] to thee :—

"In the past, this holy sage was a virtuous monarch, versed in all branches of learning, delighting in the welfare of his subjects and the destroyer of his foes.

"Kusha, the righteous and powerful king, was the son of Prajapati, and his son was Gadhi, and the great and illustrious Sage Vishwamitra is the son of Gadhi.

"On ascending the throne, King Vishwamitra ruled the earth for many thousands of years. At a certain time, King Vishwamitra, assembling his army, set out to range the earth. O Rama, he passed through many cities and kingdoms and crossed innumerable rivers, mountains and forests, visiting many hermitages till he came to the one belonging to Shri Vasishtha. This hermitage was thickly planted with many-branched trees with dense foliage in which birds of every kind dwelt. Many species of beasts frequented that place, and the siddhas also came there—devas, gandharvas and other celestial beings added to the peace and beauty of that hermitage by their presence. Beautiful birds flew about and peaceful deer wandered here and there. Many learned brahmins also dwelt in that hermitage.

"Brahmin sages and also celestial rishis inhabited that place, so that it shone like fire by virtue of their presence. This hermitage sheltered many great Vedic scholars equal to Brahma, some living only on air, some on water, some on dry leaves. Other sages lived on fruit and roots, and there were in addition thousands of brahmacharis fully self-subdued.

"Each sage observed the sacred traditions, performing his morning and evening devotions, repeating the silent prayer (japa) offering water to the spirits of his ancestors, and pouring oblations into the sacrificial fire.

[1] Brahmarishi—There are four kinds of sages or rishis : The Rajarishi or royal sage, the Maharishi or great sage, the Brahmarishi or sacred sage and the Devarishi or divine sage. The ascending scale culminates in the Devarishi.

[2] Kaushika—The name of Vishwamitra, he being the son of King Kusika, or Kusha.

"Many retired householders practising Yoga, dwelt there with their wives. Verily that hermitage resembled the abode of Brahma, and the great and powerful King Vishwamitra rejoiced to behold it."

CHAPTER 52

How King Vishwamitra visits Shri Vasishtha's hermitage and accepts hospitality provided by the wish-fulfilling cow, Shabala

BEHOLDING the hermitage, the mighty Vishwamitra filled with joy, bowed with great humility to Shri Vasishtha who was engaged in the telling of his rosary.

Shri Vasishtha welcomed the king and bade him be seated, and he having done so was offered the fruits and roots that grew in that place.

Honoured by the holy sage, King Vishwamitra enquired of him if all were well with the fire sacrifice, his spiritual practices and his disciples. Shri Vasishtha related to him all that concerned his welfare and the welfare of those in the hermitage, even to the trees themselves.

Sitting at ease, Shri Vasishtha said to King Vishwamitra, eminent among yogis and a son of Shri Brahma himself: "O King, is it well with thee in all ways? Dost thou give satisfaction to thy subjects in accordance with the law of righteousness and dost thou rule and protect thy people according to the spiritual law? Is thy revenue justly received and increased? Is it judiciously administered and distributed to those who are eligible and deserving? Are thy servants remunerated at the proper season? Do thy subjects willingly obey thee? O Sovereign, hast thou subdued thine enemies? O Sinless King, is it well with thine army, thy treasury, thy friends, thy sons and grandsons?"

In reply to these questions, King Vishwamitra humbly answered: "All is well, my Lord!"

Conversing pleasantly together for a long time, recounting

the ancient traditions to each other, they thus promoted their mutual delight.

O Prince of the House of Raghu, when King Vishwamitra paused, Shri Vasishtha said to him smilingly: "O King, although thou hast with thee a large retinue, yet it is my desire to offer thee hospitality, together with thine army. Be pleased to accept it. Since thou art a distinguished guest, it is meet that I should do all within my power to entertain thee, therefore, be gracious enough to receive the little I have to offer."

King Vishwamitra answered: "O Lord, thy gentle and pleasing words are sufficient entertainment. Moreover, thou hast already presented me with fruits and the clear water of thy hermitage. By meeting with thee alone, am I sufficiently honoured. O Supremely Wise One, it was proper that I should offer obeisance to thee; now thou hast entertained me, allow me to offer thee salutations and depart."

The great sage declined to accept the king's refusal of his offer, and still insisted that he should entertain him.

Then Vishwamitra said: "Be it according to thy pleasure, my Lord, I will do as thou desirest."

At these words, Shri Vasishtha sent for his favourite spotted cow Kamadhenu and said to her: "O Shabala, draw near and listen to me, I desire to offer hospitality to the king and his army. O Dear One, thou art the wish-fulfilling cow and can accomplish anything, therefore, now prepare splendid dishes which will be pleasing to them, of the six kinds of taste.[1] Produce speedily whatever food can be eaten, drunk, licked or sucked."

CHAPTER 53

The king desires to possess Shabala but Shri Vasishtha will not give her up

THE cow Shabala provided for the needs of all according to the instruction of Shri Vasishtha. Sugar cane, sweets of various kinds, honey, crushed barley, wine and other excellent drinks,

[1] The six kinds of taste: sweet, bitter, acid, salt, pungent and acrid.

hot rice in heaps as high as mountains, milk, curry and other fare combining the six tastes and countless other dishes with sweets made of jagari[1] were distributed. Each was wholly satisfied and delighted with the hospitality of Shri Vasishtha, who accorded to all the companions and retainers of King Vishwamitra the full extent of their desires.

The king with his family priests, ministers and attendants, partaking of the feast offered with generosity and respect by the great sage, was highly gratified.

When all the counsellors and personal attendants and the army had received full hospitality, the king, wholly satisfied, said to Shri Vasishtha: " O Holy Sage, thou hast entertained me royally, please hear what I have to say O Eloquent One! O Lord, give me the cow Shabala in exchange for a hundred thousand excellent cows. Shabala is a jewel and by a king should jewels be enjoyed—according to the natural law, this treasure should therefore be mine."

Shri Vasishtha answered, saying: " O King, I will not part with Shabala in exchange for ten million cows, still less for a hundred thousand. If thou did'st offer me mountains of silver yet would I refuse to give thee Shabala for she must remain in my hermitage.

" O King, as a righteous man cares for his good name, so do I for Shabala. She helps me to satisfy the devas, the pittris and other beings. My sacred fire sacrifice and other Vedic rites, besides the various branches of learning depend on Shabala. O Great Ruler, indeed I cannot relinquish this cow, she is my all and she fulfils all my needs—for these and numerous other reasons do I refuse to yield the cow to thee. O King, verily I will not part with Shabala."

The words of Shri Vasishtha merely increased the king's desire and he, under great emotion, declared with passion: " O Great Muni, I will give thee fourteen thousand elephants adorned with golden trappings, ornaments and goads and, in addition, I will give thee a hundred and eight chariots made of solid gold, each driven by four milk white horses. At the same time, I offer thee eleven thousand well-trained horses, each with a golden harness and further ten million cows of

[1] Jagari—coarse brown Indian sugar made from palm sap.

varied colours, that are young and healthy. O give me Shabala, and I will give thee in exchange as much gold as thou desirest. Grant me Shabala, I implore thee, and accept my gifts, O Sage."

Then the wise Vasishtha said: " Under no condition can I part with Shabala, O King, she is my jewel and my wealth. She is my very life, my all-in-all, and she furnishes me with alms and all I require for sacrifice. In brief, O King, Shabala is the source of my spiritual life and I will never give her up."

CHAPTER 54

King Vishwamitra attempts to carry her away by force

O Rama, perceiving that Shri Vasishtha would not willingly consent to part with the cow, Vishwamitra resolved to carry her away by force.

O Raghava, while Shabala was being forcibly carried off, distracted with grief, she began to reflect thus: " Why has the holy Vasishtha abandoned me? In what way have I offended the holy sage? Why are the servants of the king dragging me away from the hermitage? I am innocent and docile, the holy muni is dear to me; what fault have I committed that the Mahatma Vasishtha should abandon me?"

Sighing again and again, Shabala, shaking off the hands of the king's attendants, swiftly ran and placed her head at the feet of the holy sage. Standing before Shri Vasishtha, shedding tears and lamenting loudly, she cried: " O Lord, O Son of Brahma hast thou verily abandoned me? Why are the servants of the king taking me away from thy presence, by force?"

Seeing the sorely stricken Shabala, Shri Vasishtha addressed her as he would his own sister, saying: " O Shabala, it is not by my will that thou art thus being carried away, neither hast thou offended me in any way, O Dear One. Drunk with desire, the king is taking thee from me by force. I have not the power to defend thee. The king is a warrior and lord of the earth, he is attended by a mighty army with horses, elephants and chariots, verily he is mightier than I."

Shabala, who was skilled in argument, listened to the words of Shri Vasishtha and said: "O Holy Sage, the power of a warrior is as nought compared to that of a holy sage. O Illustrious Lord, the strength of a sage is divine and based on the exercise of spiritual practices and discipline, it is therefore limitless; thou art, O Lord, immeasurably stronger than a kshatriya. The power of that mighty king Vishwamitra, is great, but he cannot equal thy strength and splendour. O Lord, through thy strength and energy suffer me to destroy the power and pride of this wicked wretch."

Shri Vasishtha answered: "Be it so! Create an army by thy spiritual energy, that will destroy the forces of the king."

Lowing loudly, Shabala, in obedience to the sage, instantly produced hundreds of foreign soldiers, who began to destroy the army of Vishwamitra while he was looking on. Perceiving his army about to be overthrown, King Vishwamitra became enraged and, mounting his chariot, his eyes red with anger, he advanced to the attack. With various weapons, he began to slay thousands of men, and Shabala, seeing the army created by her, annihilated, now produced strange beings called shakas in such numbers, that they filled the whole earth. Highly valorous, their skins shining like gold, clad in yellow armour, furnished with scimitars and maces, they started to consume the army of Vishwamitra like a raging fire.

Then the great Vishwamitra, with the aid of yogic weapons, began to create disorder in the ranks of the forces produced by Shabala.

CHAPTER 55

Shabala creates an army which annihilates Vishwamitra's forces

As the mighty warriors fell, pierced by the weapons of Vishwamitra's forces, Shri Vasishtha said to Shabala: "O Shabala, create more warriors by the power of Yoga."

Shabala, lowing loudly, produced well-armed soldiers from her feet and udders, and from her hair and thighs were born the extraordinary warriors Harita and Kirata. By these, the whole army of Vishwamitra consisting of elephants, horses and chariots, was instantly destroyed. Beholding their entire army exterminated by the power of Shri Vasishtha, King Vishwamitra's hundred sons bearing mighty arms and with various thought-propelled weapons rushed angrily at the holy Sage Vasishtha. Shri Vasishtha merely uttered the sound " H'm ! " and they were all immediately consumed. By the great Sage Vasishtha, the infantry, cavalry and chariots, together with the sons of King Vishwamitra, were instantly burned to ashes.

Then the illustrious monarch Vishwamitra whose sons and army had been annihilated, was filled with shame and dismay. Deprived of his glory, he resembled a waveless ocean or a snake bereft of its fangs or the sun under eclipse. Like a bird without wings, his confidence shattered, his pride humbled, he became filled with anxiety. Bestowing the kingdom on his only remaining son, he exhorted him to rule according to dharma and then himself retired to the forest to practise asceticism.

After some time, he found favour with Shri Mahadeva[1] the magnanimous granter of boons, and he, appearing before Vishwamitra, addressed him saying : " O King, why art thou undergoing penance ? What is thy desire ? I will grant thee whatsoever thou asketh ? "

Shri Vishwamitra making obeisance to Shri Mahadeva said to him : " O Great God, if I have found favour with thee, then instruct me in the Upanishads and other branches of learning, teach me also the mysteries and the science of archery. Whatever weapons are known to the danavas, yakshas, asuras and other beings, let them be revealed to me by thy grace."

On hearing the request of the king, Shri Shiva answered, " Be it so " and returned to his abode.

King Vishwamitra, having acquired the various weapons from Mahadeva, became as happy as the sea at the time of the full moon. He now resolved to subdue the Sage Vasishtha and regarded him as his captive already.

Proceeding to his hermitage he discharged his great weapons

[1] Mahadeva—Great God, a name of Shiva.

like rain, setting the forest of Tapovan ablaze. Afflicted by these dreadful weapons, all the sages began to flee to the four quarters in terror; even the disciples of Shri Vasishtha, together with innumerable birds and beasts, escaped hastily in every direction. The hermitage of Shri Vasishtha became deserted and a deep silence fell upon it, causing it to resemble a barren field.

Shri Vasishtha repeatedly called out: "Fear not, fear not, I will destroy Vishwamitra as the sun dispels the morning mist."

Then the great Sage Vasishtha, foremost among those who practise silent prayer, angrily addressed Vishwamitra saying: "Thou hast destroyed my ancient and auspicious hermitage, O Wicked and Deluded Wretch, thou thyself shalt be destroyed."

Snatching up his staff equal to the rod of Yama, he advanced like a naked flame.

CHAPTER 56

Shri Vasishtha by his spiritual strength conquers Vishwamitra who then engages in penances

HEARING the harsh words uttered by Shri Vasishtha, Vishwamitra raising the fire weapon, cried: "Stay! Beware!"

Then Shri Vasishtha, lifting up his Brahma staff in wrath, exclaimed: "O Vilest of Warriors, here I stand, let loose all thy weapons, not excepting those propelled by thought which thou hast obtained from the Lord Shiva. O Son of Gadhi, to-day I will deprive thee of all these weapons. How can thy power as a warrior compare with that of a divine sage? O Stupid Wretch, behold my divine energy!"

So saying, Shri Vasishtha quenched the dangerous fire weapon hurled at him by Vishwamitra as water quenches fire.

Then the son of Gadhi let fly other dangerous weapons upon the holy sage, the Varuna, the Rudra, the Indra, the Pashupata and Ishika weapons together with the Manava, Mohana, Gandharva, Swapana, Jrimbhana, Viadana, Santapana,

and Vilapana; the Shoshana, Darana and the terrible Vatra; the Brahma-pasha and Kalapasha, the Varuna-pasha and the priceless Pinaka and also the missiles Shushka and Ardra, the Danda weapon and the Pisacha, the Krouncha and the Dharma-discus, the Kala discus and the discus of Vishnu, also the weapon Vayuvya, Mathana and Haya-shira did he discharge upon the great sage with the two Shaktis, the Kankala, Mushala, Vidyadhara, Kala, the trident Kapala and the Kankana. All these did he hurl at the holy sage.

Then Shri Vasishtha accomplished a great marvel and by means of his staff alone destroyed all the weapons of Vishwamitra. Seeing these weapons rendered ineffectual, Vishwamitra raised the Brahman-astra. At this, Agni, the divine sages and the celestial beings were seized with terror and the three worlds shook with fear. But by means of his spiritual power and the study and practice of Brahman-Vidya, Shri Vasishtha subdued the Brahman-astra. As Shri Vasishtha consumed this tremendous weapon, his charming and pleasing mien became terrible and from each pore of his body shafts of light shot forth while the staff of the holy sage, shining like fire, burst into flame.

All the sages now began to praise Shri Vasishtha, saying: "Thy power is without equal and ever productive of good, by the power of thy Yoga, pacify the Brahman-astra. O Holy Sage, thou hast humbled the pride of Vishwamitra. O Great Ascetic, be pacified, that we also may be delivered from fear."

Thus addressed, Shri Vasishtha assumed his accustomed mien and Vishwamitra, being defeated, sighing heavily, exclaimed: "Woe, woe to the might of a warrior! The real power is the spiritual power. Shri Vasishtha by his spiritual strength has fully conquered mine. I will, therefore, abandon my warlike nature and seek to obtain brahmanhood."

CHAPTER 57

Shri Vasishtha refuses to help King Trishanku enter heaven in his physical state

The heart of Vishwamitra was heavy, remembering his disgrace, and he was filled with remorse at having borne enmity to Shri Vasishtha.

O Rama, with his queen he went to the southern quarter and began his great ascetic penance there.

After a long time four sons were born to him, each a devotee of truth, who were virtuous and of great military prowess. Their names were Havisyanda, Madhusyanda, Drirha-netra and Maharatha.

Having practised severe austerities for a thousand years, the Grandsire of the world, Shri Brahma appeared before Vishwamitra and said: " O Son of Kaushika, thou hast surpassed the royal sages in thy great asceticism, thou shalt, therefore, be numbered among them." Having thus spoken, Shri Brahma with the gods went to Brahmaloka.

Vishwamitra was filled with shame and with bowed head, overcome with grief, thus spoke: "Alas! In spite of prolonged austerities, the gods still hold me to be a royal sage.[1] I deem this state no reward for the penance I have undergone."

O Rama, with renewed resolve, Vishwamitra, pre-eminent in the field of endeavour began his life of mortification anew.

At this time, the great King Trishanku of the House of Ikswaku, fully self-subdued and a lover of truth, resolved to initiate a sacrifice in order to enter heaven in his physical body. Summoning the holy Sage Vasishtha, he communicated his intention to him, but the Mahatma Vasishtha, having duly considered the matter, said: " O King, this cannot be."

Discouraged by Shri Vasishtha and for the purpose of fulfilling his design, the monarch went southwards to where the sons of Shri Vasishtha abode, leading lives of purity and ascetism. When King Trishanku beheld the sons of his own Guru, that great and illustrious sage, he was full of shame, and with bowed

[1] See note on page 102.

head offered salutation to them, addressing them in great humility saying, " O Protectors of those who seek refuge in you, I come to seek your aid. O Holy Ones, I besought your sire to assist me in the observance of a sacrifice and he discouraged me. I have, therefore, come to seek your help in the matter. O Sons of my Holy Guru, I offer salutations to you. Again and again, I bow down to you, O Holy Ones, and beseech you to officiate at the proposed sacrifice, which I desire to undertake for the fulfilment of my design, namely that I may ascend to heaven in my embodied state. Discouraged by the holy teacher Vasishtha, I consider that you alone are able to assist me. Should you refuse me, there is none in whom I may take refuge. The kings of the House of Ikshwaku have always sought guidance of their spiritual preceptor in time of need, and the holy and learned Sage Vasishtha has ever upheld the dynasty and, following him, you alone are my instructors ".

CHAPTER 58

The king appeals to Shri Vasishtha's sons to conduct the sacrifice. They curse him and he appeals to Vishwamitra

O RAMA, hearing the words of the king, the hundred sons of Shri Vasishtha were filled with wrath and said: " O Thou Evil-minded Wretch, discouraged by thy spiritual preceptor, how dost thou dare to seek our aid? O King, we know thee to be an ignorant man. Shri Vasishtha is able to advance the sacrifices of the three worlds, verily thou art no true disciple of such a sage. Shall we render void the utterance of our great sire? "

Hearing these harsh words, the king replied: " Discouraged by my Guru and now by you, I shall seek elsewhere for aid; may all be well with you."

The sons of the great sage were enraged on hearing these words spoken in defiance, and cursed the king, saying: " Mayest

thou become one of the fallen caste." Having thus cursed him, they returned to their hermitage.

When the night was over, the king was transformed into a low-born being, his complexion dark, his body emaciated, his head shaven, his whole frame besmeared with ashes from the crematorium, his golden ornaments changed to lead.

When the people of the capital beheld the king in this condition they fled from that place, and Trishanku departed, full of anguish. Sunk in grief day and night, he finally sought refuge with Shri Vishwamitra. That sage seeing the monarch deprived of his kingdom and condemned to assume the form of a low-caste being, was moved with compassion, and addressed him saying: "O Mighty Prince, mayest thou be prosperous! Why hast thou come hither? I know thee to be the Sovereign of Ayodhya that through a curse art come to this state."

The eloquent King Trishanku, with joined palms, replied in tones of submission: "O Great One, discouraged by my Guru and his sons in my desire to enter heaven in the physical body, I have been transformed by them into a chandala.[1] Now, for shame, I may not show myself to any. O Lord, I have failed to obtain the fruit of countless sacrifices, an untruth has never been uttered by me, I have governed my people with righteousness and by my conduct have satisfied my spiritual preceptor and holy men. I desired to undertake a further meritorious sacrifice, but O Great Sage, my Guru has withheld his aid. O Lord, destiny is irrevocable, destiny is inexorable, none can withstand it. All are ruled by destiny. O Divine Sage, be favourable to me, who am fallen into distress! Besides thee, there is none in whom I can take refuge. O Holy One, by thy spiritual energy, avert this evil fate."

[1] Chandala—an outcast.

CHAPTER 59

Vishwamitra seeks the help of the sons of Vasishtha and Mahodeva; they refuse and are cursed

SHRI VISHWAMITRA heard the appeal of the fallen sovereign and in sweet accents spoke words of comfort, saying: "O King, thou art welcome, I know thee to be wholly virtuous, I will be thy refuge, fear not. I shall invite hither the learned and pious brahmans who will assist thee in the performance of thy sacrifice. This thou shalt accomplish and obtain heaven in the form imposed on thee by thy Guru. O King, having taken refuge in me, consider thy purpose already accomplished."

Having uttered these words, Shri Vishwamitra commanded his sons to prepare all things for the sacrifice. Summoning his disciples, he said to them: "Bring hither the pious and learned brahmins and the sons of Shri Vasishtha also. May they come with their disciples, their friends, the learned and the priests. If any disregard my word, let it be reported to me."

In obedience to the sage, the disciples set out to every quarter, summoning the sages and learned men from many lands. Returning, they approached Vishwamitra, and said: "O Lord, at thy command the holy sages are coming hither, some are already come, Mahodeva excepted; but the sons of holy Vasishtha, transported with rage uttered harsh words of which we will tell thee." They said: "How shall divine sages partake of that sacrifice undertaken by a chandala, at which a kshatriya officiates? And how shall those brahmins, constrained by Vishwamitra, partaking of the food offered by a chandala, enter heaven?"

O Great Sage, these are the words of the sons of Shri Vasishtha.

Vishwamitra, his eyes red with anger, answered: "Why should the sons of Shri Vasishtha disregard me, who am engaged in severe ascetic practices and without guilt? By my power, these evil-minded men shall this day be consumed to ashes and enter the abode of death. By my curse they shall become

of those who subsist on the dead for a hundred incarnations. They shall eat the flesh of dogs and be called 'Musthika'. Despised by all, they shall wander about among men and may the wicked Mahodeva also, having imputed blame to me, be born as a fowler, for a long time becoming the pitiless destroyer of other's lives and by my wrath may he sink to a miserable and abject state."

Sitting amid the sages, the Sage Vishwamitra having pronounced this curse, became silent.

CHAPTER 60

Through fear of Vishwamitra, the sages assist in the sacrifice and King Trishanku ascends to a specially created heaven

HAVING stricken the sons of Shri Vasishtha by the power of his asceticism, Vishwamitra, seated amidst the sages, spoke :—

"The renowned monarch Trishanku of the dynasty of Ikshwaku, who is both magnanimous and virtuous, has taken refuge with me. He is desirous of entering heaven in his embodied state, it is for me to accomplish it. O Sages, do you unitedly assist him in this sacrifice."

The sages hearing the words of Vishwamitra and being acquainted with the tradition, consulted together saying : "The son of Kaushika, the Rishi Vishwamitra, is given to wrath. If we do not fulfil his desire, like a consuming fire he will pour out his curse upon us. Let us, therefore, assist him in the sacrifice so that the king may enter heaven in his physical body. Now let us inaugurate the rites."

Then the rites began, as prescribed by ancient tradition, Vishwamitra acting as the chief priest and the learned brahmins becoming the sacrificing priests subordinate to him. Observing numerous rituals, the sacrifice continued for a long time. Then Shri Vishwamitra called thither the gods for their share of the sacrifice, but none of these celestial beings appeared. At this

the great sage grew exceedingly wroth and lifting up the sacrificial vessel, said to the King Trishanku: " O King, behold the power of my asceticism by virtue of which I now send thee to heaven *in thy embodied state. O King, though it is deemed impossible* to accomplish this, by the power acquired by me I now say to thee; 'ascend to heaven in thy physical form.' "

Having uttered these words, King Trishanku, in the presence of the sages instantly ascended to the heavens.

Seeing Trishanku there, Indra and all the other gods exclaimed: " O Trishanku, thou hast no place in heaven. Cursed by thy Guru, O Stupid Wretch, do thou fall headlong to the earth."

Trishanku accordingly instantly began to fall towards the earth crying out to Shri Vishwamitra, " Protect me ", " Protect me ".

Shri Vishwamitra, hearing the cry, grew angry, and called out, " Stay, Stay ". At that moment, standing amidst the sages, the great rishi resembled Prajapati. Thereafter he created seven planets in the southern quarter called the Seven Rishis, and then he created the Ashwini and twenty-seven other stars. Seated amidst the sages, filled with wrath, Vishwamitra reflected in himself: " I will create another Indra or I will leave this heaven without an Indra. Nay, I will make Trishanku Lord of this heaven," and he began to create a new circle of gods.

Upon this, the sages, gods and celestial beings, bewildered and perturbed, approached Vishwamitra and said with humility: " O Great Sage, this king has been cursed by his spiritual preceptor and is not worthy of heaven."

Shri Vishwamitra answered them, saying: " Hear, O ye Gods, I have vowed that this king should enter heaven in his embodied state, this pledge must be fulfilled. To this end, I have created the Pole star and other planets and this heaven will abide as long as the former heaven endures, as also the gods created by me, it becomes you, therefore, to confirm what I have promised."

The gods in awe, having heard these words, answered: " Be it so, O Illustrious Rishi, the heaven created by thee shall endure beyond the Path of Vishwanara, and let Trishanku, suspended head downwards, remain as if immortal among these shining

stars. As the stars attend on famous and successful men, so let these brilliant luminaries, created by thee, attend on King Trishanku."

Shri Vishwamitra, extolled by the gods, acquiesced in their proposal.

After this, O Rama, the gods and the ascetics who had attended the sacrifice, returned to their own regions.

CHAPTER 61

King Ambarisha's sacrificial horse is lost and he seeks a human victim

O Rama, when Vishwamitra saw the sages departing, he said to the dwellers of the Tapovana forest: "In the southern region, great obstructions have hindered my penances, I shall therefore go to another quarter to perform austerity. To the west of this place, at the sacred spot named Pushkara, there is a large and beautiful forest where I shall continue my practices undisturbed."

Reaching that place, the great sage engaging in occult practices, subsisted on fruit and roots.

Meanwhile, King Ambarisha of Ayodhya inaugurated the horse sacrifice, but the horse was carried away by Indra, on which the priest addressed the monarch, saying: "O King, it is for thee to protect the sacrificial steed, the horse has been stolen away owing to thy negligence, therefore, provide another or seek a human victim, so that the sacrifice may be accomplished without further hindrance."

Hearing these words, the renowned monarch offered thousands of cows to whosoever should find either a horse, or human being. Seeking the sacrificial beast, the illustrious sovereign passed through many countries, cities and forests, and entered hermitages and sacred places.

At length, the King Ambarisha beheld Richika the Sage, with his sons and wife dwelling on the mountain Bhrigutunga.

Making obeisance to him, the king honoured him in various ways and enquired as to his welfare. He then said to him: "If it be agreeable to thee, grant me one of thy sons in exchange for a hundred thousand cows. After searching many countries, I have not found either a horse or a human victim for the sacrifice. O Lord, do thou, therefore, deliver thy son to me and accede to my request."

Richika answered: "O King, I will never bestow my eldest son on any." His wife then said: "My Lord does not wish to part with the eldest son, but the youngest son Shunaka is dearest to me, I shall not part with him. O Great Muni, the eldest son is beloved of his father and the youngest is dear to his mother, therefore, these two should not be taken away."

O Rama, the middle son, whose name was Shunashepha, hearing these words, spoke thus: "My father does not wish to part with his eldest son, nor my mother with her youngest, therefore, take me, O King."

O Rama, the king gave the Sage Richika a hundred thousand cows in exchange for Shunashepha and, mounting his chariot, started with him on his homeward journey.

CHAPTER 62

Shunashepha, the human victim, seeks and obtains help from Vishwamitra

O RAMA, the illustrious King Ambarisha, accompanied by Shunashepha, having in the afternoon reached Pushkara, rested there. While the king rested, Shunashepha, going to a certain spot, beheld Shri Vishwamitra, his maternal uncle, engaged with other sages in the performance of spiritual practices and he, sorrowful, thirsty and fatigued, fell at the feet of the sage, and said: "O Lord, for me there is neither father, mother, relative nor caste. O Peaceful Sage, O Sovereign among ascetics, I take refuge in thee; in the name of dharma, deliver me. Thou can'st protect the whole world, how much more one so insignifi-

cant as myself. Do thou assist the king in the completion of his sacrifice that it may be accomplished without hindrance, and may I live and by means of my spiritual practices obtain heaven. Thou art my master who am masterless. Protect me, wretched as I am, as a father protects his child."

Shri Vishwamitra, hearing the piteous words of Shunashepha addressed his own sons, saying: "O My Sons, that world for which fathers beget their children is at hand,[1] this child is the son of the Sage Richika and has taken refuge in me, let us protect his life. You are all virtuous and charitable, let one of you take the place of the sacrificial victim at the king's sacrifice, and thus satisfy the God Agni. In this way, we can rescue Shunashepha. Assist me in the completion of the king's sacrifice, propitiate the gods, and enable me to be true to my word."

Hearing these words, Madhusyanda and the other sons sullenly replied to Vishwamitra, saying: "O King of Kings, would'st thou abandon thine own sons and protect another's? Such an action resembles the relinquishing of a tasty dish to partake of the flesh of a dog."

Hearing this reply, Shri Vishwamitra grew angry and, his eyes inflamed with wrath, he said: "Your speech is arrogant and contrary to dharma, it is a violation of filial affection. I regard you all as insubordinate, therefore, I now curse you. Like the sons of Shri Vasishtha, may you fall from your high caste and, eating the flesh of dogs, wander about in the world during the period of a thousand years!"

Having thus cursed his sons, the muni, offering Shunashepha his protection, thus instructed him: "O Son of a Sage, at King Ambarisha's sacrifice, allow thyself to be bound, adorned with the red garland, besmeared with sandalwood paste and tied to the sacrificial post. I will impart to thee two mantrams, which when repeated, will deliver thee."

The holy sage then carefully instructed him in the sacred formulas. Thereafter, Shunashepha approached the king and said: "O Illustrious Monarch, now enter upon the initiation without delay and accomplish the performance of thy sacrifice."

[1] The Hindus regard their hope of a future existence to depend to a great extent on their sons performing their obsequies.

The king, filled with joy, went without delay to the sacrificial pavilion. With the consent of the officiating priest, the king now dressed Shunashepha in red attire and tied him to the post as the consecrated victim. Being bound, Shunashepha began to praise Upendra[1] by reciting the mantrams he had been given by Vishwamitra.

Indra, pleased with the worship of Shunashepha, bestowed the blessing of long life on him.

O Rama, then did the king complete his sacrifice and obtain the desired fruit from Indra.

Thereafter, the righteous Vishwamitra renewed his yogic penance in Pushkara and performed it there for a thousand years.

CHAPTER 63

After more austerities Vishwamitra is proclaimed a Maharishi

SHRI VISHWAMITRA passed a thousand years in the practice of mortification, then the gods came to bestow on him the fruits of his asceticism. The supreme Brahma addressed him in pleasing accents, saying: "O Holy One, mayest thou be prosperous, thou art now become a rishi by virtue of thy great austerities." Having said this, Shri Brahma and the other celestial beings returned to their own spheres.

Vishwamitra again engaged in severe austerity and in this way passed many more years. While thus employed, the celestial nymph Menaka came to bathe in the Pushkara lake. Resembling lightning illumining a cloud, her beauty stirred the passion of Vishwamitra and he said to her:—

"Be gracious to me for I am filled with a great love for thee."

Then that beautiful one agreed to take up her abode in the hermitage of the rishi. The penances of Vishwamitra were thus rendered void by the presence of Menaka in the hermitage. O Rama, that nymph passed ten years in that place.

[1] Upendra—a name of Indra.

After this time, Shri Vishwamitra perceiving himself to have been deluded, was filled with shame and he reflected on the cause of his infatuation. Then he adjudged the gods to have devised this plan to bring his ascetism to nought and he cried out: " What, have I passed ten years with this woman, as it were a night. Alas! My great austerities are destroyed by this passion."

Sighing heavily and filled with remorse, he beheld Menaka trembling with fear, standing near, but Vishwamitra addressing her in reassuring words, bade her farewell.

Having controlled his passions, Shri Vishwamitra went to the northern mountains and began to perform penance in the Himalayas on the bank of the Kaushiki river.

Then, O Rama, the gods were filled with fear by the austerities practised by the rishi on the Himalayan mountains, and approaching Shri Brahma said :—

" O Grandsire, now grant the title of maharishi to Shri Vishwamitra."

Shri Brahma then appeared before Vishwamitra and in gentle accents said to him: " Hail to Thee, O Rishi, I am pleased with thine austerity. I name thee chief among the rishis."

Then Vishwamitra, making obeisance to Shri Brahma, spoke submissively saying: " O Lord, these penances have been undertaken by me that I might become a brahmarishi. Since thou still namest me maharishi, I regard myself as not yet fully self-subdued."

Shri Brahma answered, saying: " So it is, thou hast not yet fully gained the mastery over thy senses. O Great Muni, undergo further penance." Having uttered these words, Shri Brahma returned to the celestial regions.

Then Vishwamitra began an exceedingly severe penance, standing unsupported with his arms raised, living only on air; in the summer season, standing in the midst of five fires, in the rainy season lying without a canopy, in the winter practising his spiritual discipline in water, thus did he pass a thousand years.

Perceiving Vishwamitra undergoing these severe penances, the gods were greatly perturbed. At length their lord, Indra,

approached the nymph Rambha and begged her to promote his interest and cause harm to Vishwamitra.

CHAPTER 64

Indra is perturbed and sends Rambha to disturb the further austerities of the Sage

INDRA thus addressed Rambha saying: " O Rambha, it is for thee to accomplish this great work and stimulate the passions of the great Sage Vishwamitra, so that his spiritual practices may be rendered void."

O Rama, Rambha, filled with apprehension on hearing the words of Indra, said in humility: " O Indra, the Rishi Vishwamitra is easily moved to wrath, he will certainly curse me if I approach him. I fear to enter his presence, do not therefore ask me to undertake this task."

To Rambha, trembling with fear, standing with joined palms, in token of submission, Indra made answer: " O Rambha, fear not, accomplish my desire, may success attend thee!

In the spring season, assuming the form of a cuckoo calling sweetly, accompanied by the god of love, I will take my place on a blossoming tree not far from thee. O Rambha, attired in beautiful and charming apparel do thou divert the mind of the muni from his spiritual practices."

At the instance of Indra, that lovely nymph clad in enchanting raiment, faintly smiling, went forth to allure the heart of Shri Vishwamitra.

At that moment, the liquid notes of the cuckoo began to delight the rishi and he then beheld the nymph Rambha. Stirred by the cuckoo's note and the ravishing sound of the beautiful Rambha's song, Shri Vishwamitra, recollecting his former fall, was filled with misgiving and recognizing the design of the god Indra, transported with rage, cursed Rambha, saying:—

" O Rambha, O Unfortunate One, thou hast come hither

to lure me from my penance, I, who have conquered lust and anger. Mayest thou become petrified and take the form of a rock for ten thousand years. A brahmin perfected in the power of Yoga shall one day deliver thee from this curse."

Having pronounced this curse on Rambha, the rishi became a prey to remorse, for, giving way to wrath he lost the fruit of all his yogic practices.

Rambha having been instantly turned to stone, Indra and Kama, perceiving the sage filled with wrath, fled in terror.

Shri Vishwamitra having lost the merit of his penances could obtain no peace; his passions remaining unsubdued, he resolved to speak no word to any and never give way to anger; he said: "For a thousand years, I will not breathe. Reducing my body to the last extremity, mastering my senses, I will obtain brahmanhood by the power of my penance. Measureless years, shall I remain standing, neither breathing nor eating, even should my limbs become atrophied."

O Rama, Vishwamitra resolved to perform this mortification for the space of a thousand years.

CHAPTER 65

Vishwamitra performs another thousand years' austerities and he acquires brahmanhood

After this the great Rishi Vishwamitra, leaving the northern quarter, went eastward and engaged in a most severe course of austerities. Observing silence for a thousand years, he performed incomparable ascetic practices, hardly able to be accomplished.

After a thousand years, his form reduced to the semblance of wood, the royal sage, under the greatest provocation, was not incited to anger. O Rama, when Vishwamitra was persuaded that he had conquered anger, his vow of a thousand years' mortification being terminated, he sat down to eat.

At that time, Indra appeared in the guise of a brahmin and

requested the food set before the muni, upon which Vishwamitra, believing him to be a sage, gave him the whole which he had prepared for himself and still observing the vow of silence, uttered no word.

The chief of the sages, suspending his breath for a further thousand years, continued his penance, then there issued from his head a smoke which terrified the beings of the three worlds. By the power of his mortification, the devas, gandharvas, and other beings were deprived of their glory and lost consciousness.

In distress, they addressed Shri Brahma saying: "O Lord, by every means in our power, we have sought to distract the great sage from his penances and provoke him to anger, but he has persisted in his practices and is free from desire and aversion. If thou dost not grant him brahmanhood, verily the three worlds will be destroyed. None can find rest anywhere, the seas are drying up and the mountains are riven by the power of his austerities; the sun is deprived of its splendour, the earth is agitated and the wind stirs not. O Lord, we cannot move him from his resolve. On account of this peril, men like atheists have given up the performance of charitable deeds. Nowhere is peace to be found. O Divine Being, lest the mighty Vishwamitra, resplendent as fire, determine to destroy the universe, deign to grant him his desire. As Time, in the form of fire, at the dissolution of the world, consumes the whole universe, so also will the Sage Vishwamitra. Grant him, therefore, Indrahood, if he so desire it, for if Thou withhold brahmanhood which he has sought to acquire, then only the sovereignty of Indra's region, will content him."

Thus approached, Shri Brahma, accompanied by the gods, appeared before Shri Vishwamitra and in pleasing accents addressed him, saying: "O Brahmarishi, reverence to thee, we are pleased with thine austerity. O Holy Vishwamitra, by the power of thy penance, thou hast acquired brahmanhood. The gods bless thee, may prosperity attend thee, may longevity be thine! From to-day, thou art free, now go where thou pleaseth."

Offering salutations to Shri Brahma and all the gods, Shri Vishwamitra said: "Having bestowed brahmanhood and

longevity upon me, grant me instruction in the holy syllable 'AUM' and the Vedas also, and further invest me with the authority to officiate at the sacrifice. O Ye Gods, let the son of Brahma, Shri Vasishtha, fully acquainted with the Vedic science, acknowledge me as a brahmarishi. If this desire of mine be fulfilled, ye may all depart."

Thereupon the gods appeared before Shri Vasishtha, who having acquiesced in their wish and sealed his friendship with Vishwamitra, said to him: "Verily thou art now a brahmarishi and as such I acknowledge thee." Thereafter the gods returned to their own region. Thus did the illustrious Sage Vishwamitra acquire brahmanhood.

The divine sage then paid homage to the great Vasishtha and, his purpose accomplished, wandered about the earth engaged in charitable deeds. Shri Shatananda said: "O Rama, this is the story of Shri Vishwamitra and how he obtained brahmanhood. O Raghava, verily he is the chief of sages and the personification of Yoga. Constantly engaged in acts of virtue, he still performs rigorous penances."

Having uttered these words, Shri Shatananda became silent.

When this excellent sage had ended his narrative, King Janaka in the presence of Rama and Lakshmana humbly addressed Shri Vishwamitra saying: "O Chief of Sages, blessed am I, that thou art come with Shri Rama and Lakshmana to my sacrifice. O Muni, thou hast, by thy presence, done us great honour. O Brahmarishi, thou hast added to our renown. Shri Rama, my counsellors and I have heard the story of thy wonderful austerities and also of thine excellent qualities. O Great Sage, immense is thy power, unimaginable thy penances, incalculable thy virtues, nor does one ever tire of hearing of thy marvellous deeds. O Illustrious Lord, the sun has set and the time of evening devotion is near, graciously grant us leave to depart; in the morning we shall see thee again."

Shri Vishwamitra gratified by the king's words, praised him and granted him permission to depart, upon which King Janaka rose and circumambulating the great sage took his departure, accompanied by his spiritual preceptor and relatives.

Honoured by the sages, the great Vishwamitra with Shri Rama and Lakshmana also returned to his abode.

CHAPTER 66

King Janaka relates the story of the great bow and the birth of Sita

THE day dawned peacefully and King Janaka, having performed his morning devotions, called for the two princes and Vishwamitra. Having honoured the sage and the two descendants of the House of Raghu, he said: " O Blessed Lord, peace be with thee, what service can I render thee, I am wholly thine."

Thus addressed by the king, the Sage replied: " These two princes are the sons of King Dasaratha, they are renowned in the warrior caste and exalted throughout the earth. They desire to see the great bow, which is deposited with thee, be gracious enough to permit them to view it and having thus accomplished their purpose, they will return to their own capital."

Thus addressed, King Janaka replied to the sage: " O Holy Rishi, hear from me for what reason this bow is deposited with me. There was a king named Devarata in the sixth generation of the monarch Nimi who obtained this bow as a trust. In ancient days, Shri Mahadeva at the destruction of Daksha's[1] sacrifice, lifting up his bow in sport said to the gods: ' O Devas, ye have failed to give me my share in the sacrifice, therefore, by means of this bow I shall destroy you all.'

" O Great Sage, the devas overwhelmed with fear, making supplication to the god, succeeded in propitiating Shri Mahadeva. Then he delivered the bow to the gods and they bestowed it on King Devarata. This is the bow.

" Thereafter, while I was ploughing the earth for a sacrifice, a virgin issued therefrom. Being uncovered by the edge of the plough, I named her Sita[2] and she became my daughter. This earth-born virgin has grown up under my protection. For the marriage of my daughter, it was established by me and made known to the kings coming to seek her hand, that I should not bestow her on any prince whose strength had not been fully tried. O Renowned Sage, these kings have come to test

[1] Daksha—the father of Parvati, the son of Brahma, one of the Prajapatis
[2] Sita—literally a furrow.

their prowess and I have placed the bow before them and requested them to string it, but none as yet has been able to do so. Perceiving them to be deficient in strength, I have refused to bestow my daughter on any of them. These kings, inflamed with anger, considering their failure to string the bow had brought them into disrepute, surrounded my capital, and inflicted great hardship on my people. This siege endured a full year and immeasurably reduced my treasury. Undergoing severe penances, I propitiated the gods, who granted me a large army with which I have defeated those kings who have retreated, bereft of courage, yet still smarting under imagined injury.

" O Great Sage, this is that bow and I will show it to these two princes. O Rishi, should Shri Ramachandra be able to string the bow, I will give my daughter Sita to him in marriage."

CHAPTER 67

The illustrious Rama breaks the bow and is given the Princess Sita in marriage

HEARING the words of King Janaka, Shri Vishwamitra said :—

" O King, let the bow be shown to Shri Rama."

Then the monarch addressed his ministers, saying : " Go, bring the bow adorned with flowers and sandalwood, hither."

The counsellors commanded by Janaka went to the capital and brought back the bow. Five hundred men, of great strength, brought the eight-wheeled cart on which the bow was placed. Having brought the chest fashioned of iron containing the bow, the ministers addressed their divine sovereign, saying : " O Chief of Men, here is the bow worshipped by former kings. O Sovereign of Mithila, it is at thy disposal."

Then, with palms joined in humility, King Janaka spoke to the holy Sage Vishwamitra standing with Rama and Lakshmana : " O Holy Lord, this is the bow which has been the object of worship to the kings of the Nimi dynasty and which the monarchs

of the earth coming hither have sought to string. Even the gods have not been able to raise, bend or string this bow. How, therefore, should mortals have the power to do so if the gods have failed? O Great Rishi, behold the bow, let the two princes examine it."

The righteous Sage Vishwamitra, hearing the words of the king, said to Rama: "O Child, view this divine bow." Then Shri Rama, approaching the casket in which the bow lay, opened it and gazed upon it.

He said: "O Divine Lord, taking it in my hand and raising it up, I shall endeavour to string the bow." Then the king and the sage answered: "Be it so," and Shri Ramachandra with a slight effort, seizing the centre of the bow, lifted it up in the presence of thousands of people and without exertion drew it. By the unparalleled strength of the illustrious Rama, the bow broke into two parts and a sound resembling the fall of a thunderbolt rang forth cleaving the mountains asunder and causing the earth to shake, and on this the people on every side fell insensible, save only Vishwamitra, Rama and Lakshmana.

After a while, the people being somewhat restored, and the king's misgivings set at rest, he addressed the excellent Sage with humility, saying: "O Blessed Lord, I have witnessed the unparalleled, wonderful and incontestable feat of Shri Ramachandra. My daughter, the Princess Sita, shall obtain Prince Rama as her lord and add to the glory of my dynasty. O Great Sage, to-day my pledge to subject the prospective wooer of my daughter to a trial of strength has been redeemed. Now I shall bestow on Rama, Sita, who is dearer to me than my life. With thy permission, O Sage, my messengers in swift chariots shall drive in all haste to Ayodhya and respectfully relating this event to King Dasaratha invite him to my capital. They shall further inform him regarding the well-being of the two princes protected by thee and with due honour, convey the great king hither."

The Sage Vishwamitra acquiescing to the proposal, the king communicated the matter to his messengers and entrusting them with a personal missive to King Dasaratha, sent them forth on their deputation.

CHAPTER 68

King Janaka sends messengers to invite King Dasaratha to the capital

COMMANDED by King Janaka, the messengers in swift chariots, passing three nights on the way, their horses greatly fatigued, arrived at Ayodhya. Entering the gates of the palace, they addressed the sentries, saying :—

" Please inform the king that we have come from King Janaka and desire an audience."

King Dasaratha being informed, caused the messengers to be brought before him. Entering the royal palace, they beheld the aged king who resembled a god. His benign and gracious presence putting them at their ease, they addressed him in gentle and submissive accents saying : " O Illustrious Sovereign, the Lord of the kingdom of Mithila, the performer of great sacrifices, King Janaka, enquires with affection as to thy well-being and also concerning the welfare of thy subjects. With the consent of the Sage Vishwamitra he sends you the following good tidings. His daughter who has been wooed by many kings unable to pass the requisite trial of strength, who have thereupon returned home discomfited, has been won by thy highly fortunate and princely son. He, in the company of the Sage Vishwamitra, coming hither, broke the sacred bow in the presence of a great assembly, therefore, King Janaka desiring to see his daughter wedded to thy son, Shri Ramachandra, sends thee the following message : " O Great Sovereign be gracious enough to visit my kingdom with all speed, together with thy preceptors, thy family and attendants and be united with thy sons. Accept the love I bear for thee. Do thou come hither and witness the nuptials of thy children.

" O King, these are the words of King Janaka which we bring to thee approved by the Sage Vishwamitra and the priest Shri Shatananda."

Having uttered these words, the messengers, overawed by the sovereign's presence, became silent.

On receiving these tidings, King Dasaratha full of joy, said

to the holy Sage Vasishtha, Shri Vamadeva and his ministers: "Protected by Shri Vishwamitra, Shri Ramachandra and Prince Lakshmana are now in the city of Mithila. The renowned Janaka has witnessed the prowess of Shri Ramachandra and desires to give his daughter in marriage to him. If this union is looked upon with favour by you, let us start for Mithila immediately, so that we may reach it with all speed."

The sages and ministers there present, answered: "It is well," whereupon the king, highly pleased, said: "Let us set out to-morrow."

King Dasaratha with his counsellors entertained King Janaka's messengers with great respect, and they passed the night there in comfort.

CHAPTER 69

King Dasaratha sets out with his spiritual preceptor, relations and ministers

THE night being over, King Dasaratha, glad in heart, accompanied by his spiritual preceptor and relations, summoned his chief minister, Sumantra, and said:—

"Let the officers of the treasury take with them wealth and jewels in abundance and precede us in good order. Let the four divisions of my army hold themselves in readiness and let chariots and palanquins be prepared. Let my commands be carried out with promptitude. Suffer Shri Vasishtha, Vamadeva, Javali, Kashyapa, Bhrigu, Markandeya and Katyayana with other learned and holy men to lead the procession. Make ready the royal chariot, let there be no delay, King Janaka's messengers are eager to return."

Then the mighty King Dasaratha attended by the holy sages set out on the journey followed by his army. Passing four nights on the road, they entered the capital of King Janaka, who, having commanded the city to be decorated, advanced to pay honour to his royal guests. Approaching the aged

sovereign Dasaratha, King Janaka was filled with joy, and addressed him with cheerful words, saying: " O Great King, I bid thee welcome, fortunate indeed am I that thou hast been gracious enough to honour me with thy presence. Now shalt thou have the felicity of looking on thy two sons. Twice blessed am I that Shri Vasishtha, attended by other learned sages, has come hither also, as it were Indra in the midst of the gods. Every impediment to the wedding ceremony has been withdrawn and this ancient dynasty, by the alliance with the House of Raghu, will acquire new lustre. O Illustrious Sovereign, to-morrow at the completion of the sacrifice, having consulted with the sages, be gracious enough to celebrate the nuptials."

The eloquent monarch, Dasaratha, seated amidst the sages, answered: " I have ever heard that those who receive charity are subject to the conferrer of that charity! O Thou acquainted with virtue, it is ours to defer to thee in all things."

Hearing the speech of the truthful sovereign, King Dasaratha, King Janaka was filled with astonishment.

All the sages then coming together, passed the night in converse, mutually delighting each other.

King Dasaratha, being united with his sons was filled with happiness and surrendered himself wholly to King Janaka's hospitality.

The magnanimous sovereign of Mithila, having completed the orders for the preparations of the wedding ceremony, retired to rest.

CHAPTER 70

The king with Vishwamitra and the princes are invited to King Janaka's court where Vishwamitra relates the descent of the dynasty

THE following day, King Janaka, having carried out the sacrifice with the assistance of the priests, said to Shri Shatananda :—

" My younger brother, the virtuous and mighty Kushadwaja, resides in the city of Sankanshya, which is surrounded by a moat

and battlements, mounted by heavy batteries, the river Ikshu flowing at its side, and resembles the aerial chariot Pushpaka. I desire to see that Excellent One, who, with liberality, has assisted me in the act of sacrifice; it is meet that he should attend the marriage ceremony."

Having spoken thus to Shri Shatananda, certain attendants standing near, were commanded by the king to set out thither. At his command, the messengers, like gods riding out on the behest of Indra, went forth on swift horses to bring back the royal guest.

Arriving at Sankanshya, and being received by the King Kushadwaja, they acquainted him with King Janaka's proposal. The great king acquiescing to his request, came to the capital of the sovereign of Mithila and beholding the virtuous great-souled Janaka, together with Shri Shatananda, bowed down to them in salutation.

Having occupied a royal seat in the assembly, the two illustrious brothers commanded their chief minister, Sudamana, saying: "O Chief of Counsellors, speedily approach the great sovereign, Dasaratha, of limitless glory, and bring that Excellent One to my court, together with the two princes and his ministers."

Sudamana, going to the encampment of King Dasaratha, and bowing down to him, said: "O Great Hero, O Lord of Ayodhya, the sovereign of Mithila humbly invites thee with thy spiritual preceptor, thy priests and thy two sons to his assembly."

Then King Dasaratha attended by his friends and kinsmen came to the place where King Janaka sat amidst the sages and ministers. And he, the wise and eloquent monarch addressed King Janaka, saying: "O Great King, it is known to thee that the chief priest of the House of Ikshwaku is Shri Vasishtha and my spokesman in all matters. Therefore, with the approval of Shri Vishwamitra he will relate the descent of our dynasty to thee."

Having spoken, Dasaratha became silent and Shri Vasishtha then addressed King Janaka and Shri Shatananda:—

"From Brahman, the Unmanifest, the Eternal and Imperishable Brahma came forth. From him was produced Maricha, Maricha begot Kashyapa; Kashyapa begot Surya, Surya

begot Vivaswat, and Vivaswat begot Manu. Manu was the father of Ikswaku who was the first king of Ayodhya. The son of Ikswaku was Kukshi and his son was Vikukshi; the illustrious Vana was the son of Vikukshi and Vana's son was the mighty Anranya; his son was Prithu and the son of Prithu was Trishanku; the great Dhundhumara was the son of Trishanku and his son was the hero Yuvanashwa. The renowned Mandhata was born of Yuvanashwa and Mandhata's son was named Susandhi. Susandhi had two sons Dhruva-sandhi and Prasenajit. Bharata was the son of Dhruva-sandhi and the renowned Asit was the son of Bharata. The three sons of Asit were Hihaxas, Talajanghas and Shashavindus, great Kings, who, hostile to their sire, waged war against him and sent him into exile. Then King Asit, with his two consorts, going to the Himalayas, there laid down his life, leaving the queens pregnant, whereat one of them, to destroy the fruit of the other's womb, gave her poison.

"At that time, a sage of the family of Bhrigu dwelt on the heights of Himalaya, by name Chyavana practising penance there. Then the lotus-eyed Queen Kalindi, desirous of bearing an excellent son approached the sage who resembled a god and bowed before him. The brahmin addressed the queen saying: 'O Fortunate One, thou bearest in thy womb, a hero, soon to be born together with the poison; have no anxiety.'

"The queen, faithful to her deceased lord, overcome with sorrow, fearing the death of her child, paid homage to the muni. Thereafter she bore a son, born with the poison administered by the other wife and he was named Sagara.

"The son of Sagara was Asumanjas, and his son was Anshuman. The son of Anshuman was Dilipa, and Dilipa's son was Bhagiratha. The son of Bhagiratha was Kakustha and his son was Raghu. The son of Raghu, Prabradha became a demon, and was subsequently called Kalamashapada and his son was Shangana. The son of Shangana was Sudarshana, and his son was Agni-varna. Shighraga was the son of Agni-varna and the son of Shighraga was Manu. Manu's son was Prashushruka and his son was Ambarisha. Ambarisha's son was named Nahusha and his son was Yayati. The son of Yayati was Nabhaga.

"The son of Nabhaga was Aja, and the son of Aja was King Dasaratha; the two sons of King Dasaratha are Rama and Lakshmana.

"O King, I have recounted the genealogy of King Ikswaku to thee. All these kings were noble, virtuous and distinguished in their love of truth.

"King Dasaratha requests the hands of thy daughters in marriage for his two sons, who are in every way worthy to be thy kinsmen. O Chief of Men, bestow thy daughters on them."

CHAPTER 71

King Janaka gives an account of the succession and his dynasty

KING JANAKA, paying homage to the Sage Vasishtha, said: "O Maharishi, be peace with thee, hear the account of the succession of our dynasty. At the time of bestowing a daughter in marriage, it is customary for the father to recite the pedigree of his race, be gracious enough to hear me, O Lord.

"In ancient times, renowned in the three worlds was the King Nimi, eminent in virtue, a lover of truth and foremost among kings of that era. Nimi begot Mithi whose son was the first Janaka and he begot Udavasu. His son was Nandivardhana and he begot Suketu. Suketu begot the righteous Devarata and the son of Devarata was the royal Sage Brihadratha. He begot the great hero Mahavirya whose son was Dhratiman and his son was the truthful Sudhriti. He begot Dhrishta-Ketu and his son was the royal Sage Haryashwa. Haryashwa begot Maru. Then followed Prasidhaka, Kirttiratha, Devamirha, Bibudha, Mahidhraka, Kirtivaja and Maharoma. Maharoma begot Swarnaroma and his son was Hraswaroma. Hraswaroma had two sons of whom I, myself, am the elder, and this is my younger brother Kushadwaja. My father, bequeathing the kingdom to me and charging me with the care of Kushadwaja, retired to the forest. My aged sire, having passed from this world, I began to rule according to dharma,

supporting my brother with the utmost affection. After some time, the King Sudhanwa besieged the capital of Mithila, thereafter he sent me offers of peace on condition I surrendered my daughter, Sita, and also the sacred bow of Shiva to him. O Brahmarishi, on rejecting his offer a battle ensued between us in which Sudhanwa was slain. O Great Sage, King Sudhanwa being dead, I gave the kingdom of Sankasya to my well-beloved brother Kushadwaja. This is my well-beloved brother. O Sages, we submit ourselves in love, to thee.

" O Raghava, to Shri Ramachandra I give my daughter Sita, and Prince Lakshmana will receive the Princess Urmila. Sita, resembling a daughter of the gods, I bestow on Rama; verily with my whole heart do I yield these two daughters of mine to thy sons. O King, now be pleased to inaugurate the traditional distribution of kine in charity. Perform the Nandi-Mukha[1] ceremony so that the nuptials may be celebrated.

" To-day the Magda star is in the ascendant and in three days the Uttara Phalguni will have risen; the marriage should take place in that conjunction.

" For the purpose of ensuring their felicity, let Rama and Lakshmana now distribute cows, land, sesamum seed and other requisite offerings."

CHAPTER 72

The marriage of the four sons of King Dasaratha is arranged and preparations commence

KING JANAKA having uttered these words, Mahamuni Vishwamitra, as desired by Shri Vasishtha, said to him :—

" O King, wonderful indeed are the two Houses of Ikshwaku and Videha, their glory is limitless, verily they have no equal. Shri Rama and Sita are in perfect accord one with the other, as also Lakshmana and Urmila, each equals the other in grace and heritage. O Virtuous King, I have something further to

[1] Nandi-mukha ceremony—The distribution of cows in charity.

say, hear me. Thy younger brother, King Kushadwaja, unexcelled in virtue, has two daughters of incomparable beauty, these two I request for the sagacious Bharata and the pious Shatrughna. The four sons of King Dasaratha are youthful, handsome, resembling the gods, equal to the (four) guardians of the world. O Great King, bestow these two damsels on the younger sons of King Dasaratha. Thou art unequalled in virtue and the House of Ikswaku is without a peer."

Hearing the magnanimous words of Shri Vishwamitra echoed by Shri Vasishtha, King Janaka with joined palms humbly addressed the two august sages :—

" O Holy Ones, I am proud that you have approved the alliance of my House with the House of Ikshwaku. Your commands shall be accomplished. The daughters of King Kushadwaja shall be given to the Princes Bharata and Shatrughna in marriage. Let the four great sons of King Dasaratha be united with the four princesses on the same day. O Divine Sage, to-morrow the constellation Phalguni presided over by the deity Bhag[1] is in the ascendant. The wise consider this season as auspicious for the nuptials."

Shri Vasishtha answering " Be it so ", King Janaka, in great humility, addressed the holy sages, saying : " O Spiritual Kings, it is by your favour that I am able to offer my daughters in marriage. Regard me as your servant. Ye are worthy of these seats prepared for you. Let my kingdom now belong to the King Dasaratha and my affections extend to the kingdom of Ayodhya. I have spoken truth. O Holy Ones, do what is considered necessary."

King Dasaratha hearing with attention the words uttered by King Janaka was pleased and replied, saying : " O Brothers, possessing innumerable excellent qualities, ye have honoured the holy rishis and kings with abundant hospitality. May you be blessed ! May happiness be yours ! With your leave I shall now withdraw to my own apartments to inaugurate the preliminary rites."

Having taken leave of the King of Mithila, Shri Dasaratha, preceded by the holy sage, went away.

[1] Bhag—one of the Adityas q.v., whose special season Uttara Phalguni is considered favourable for marriages or alliances.

The following day, having fulfilled the traditional rites, King Dasaratha gave away innumerable cows in charity. On behalf of each of his sons, he bestowed on the brahmins thousands of cows whose horns were covered with gold, yielding rich milk, together with their calves. With every cow the king gave away a metal milking vessel. On that day, four hundred thousand cows were given away by him. That mighty king holding his sons supremely dear, gave incalculable wealth in their name. King Dasaratha, performing these deeds of charity, surrounded by his sons, resembled Brahma attended by the Regents of the world.

CHAPTER 73

The marriage ceremonies are completed

ON the day on which King Dasaratha distributed the cows in charity, the great hero Yudhajit, the son of the King Kaikeya and the maternal uncle of Bharata, also came to Janaka's capital.

Seeing King Dasaratha, he made enquiries as to his welfare and said: " O King, the Lord of Kaikeya, through affection, sends tidings of his well-being to thee, and seeks to know if it be well with thy friends. O Great King, my father desired to see Prince Bharata, and for this purpose I went to Ayodhya. There, hearing that thou hadst gone to Mithila with thy sons, for their nuptials, I came hither in haste to see the son of my sister."[1]

King Dasaratha thereupon duly honoured his kinsman who spent the night happily in company with the princes.

The following day, rising early, King Dasaratha performing his customary devotions, proceeded to the sacrificial pavilion, escorted by the sages.

At an auspicious hour in the presence of Shri Vasishtha and other sages, Shri Ramachandra and his brothers adorned with every ornament being present, the preliminary ceremonies were performed.

[1] = Bharata being the son of Queen Kaikeyi, daughter of the King of Kaikeyi.

Then Shri Vasishtha addressed King Janaka saying: "O King, King Dasaratha has inaugurated the preliminary ceremonies, he now awaits thy pleasure. The sacred rite is completed when host and guests come together. Be pleased, therefore, to perform the principal nuptial rites."

King Janaka listened to the words of the great-souled Vasishtha and answered: "What guard detains King Dasaratha at the gate? Whose sanction does his royal majesty seek? Is not this his house? Let the king enter! O Chief of Sages, my daughters, in readiness, stand at the altar, bright as the clear flame. I, standing near, await you all. There is no need for delay. Let the king cause the ceremony to take place without further hindrance."

Then King Dasaratha with his sons and the holy sages entered the marriage pavilion. Thereafter, King Janaka addressed Shri Vasishtha, saying: "O Virtuous Sage, with the other sages perform the wedding ceremony."

Then Shri Vasishtha ignited the sacrificial fire in the centre of the pavilion. Shri Vishwamitra and Shri Shatananda standing before him, sprinkled the altar with perfume, and decorated it with flowers. Then he set out the golden vessels and the sacred kusha grass, filling many pots with incense and arranging them in the form of a conchshell. Dishes filled with parched corn and rice were placed there, and durbha grass spread about, the sacred formulas being pronounced over them. The holy rishis now lit a fire pronouncing the Vedic mantrams and offered oblations into it.

Shri Sita, adorned with jewels, took her seat by the sacred fire opposite Shri Ramachandra. King Janaka, addressing the Son of Raghu, said: "O Rama, from to-day my daughter Sita will be thy companion in virtue. Accept her, O Prince, and take her hand in thine. This fortunate princess, faithful and tender, will constantly attend thee, following thee like a shadow, in loving obedience. May you both be happy."

Saying this, King Janaka sprinkled on them water purified by mantrams. Then all the gods cried, "Jai! Jai!"[1] and divine music sounded, while a shower of flowers fell from the skies.

Thus was Sita joined in marriage to Shri Ramachandra.

[1] Jai! Jai!—literally Victory! Victory!

Then King Janaka said to Shri Lakshmana: "O Lakshmana, come hither, peace be with thee! Take in thy hand the hand of my daughter Urmila, tarry not, O Prince."

Having thus spoken, Janaka likewise addressed Prince Bharata, saying: "O Son of Raghu, accept the hand of the Princess Mandavi" and to Prince Shatrughna, he said: "O Great Prince, accept the hand of Shruta-kirtti. O Princes of the House of Raghu, be gentle and faithful to your wives as they will be to you, receive them now, let there be no delay."

Thus instructed by King Janaka, the four princes, taking the hands of the four princesses as directed by the Sage Vasishtha, circumambulated the fire, King Janaka and the sages performing the rites as ordained by the sacred ordinance.

As the nuptial ceremony of the four princes of the House of Raghu with the four princesses terminated, a rain of flowers fell on them from the sky. Divine music sounded, nymphs danced and the celestial singers broke into paeons of praise. All these marvellous events marked the wedding of the sons of King Dasaratha while the princes, circumambulating the fire, were united with their brides.

Thereafter with their wives, they returned to their apartments and King Janaka with his relatives and friends, with a joyful heart having taken part in the festivities, also withdrew.

CHAPTER 74

Parasurama appears amidst inauspicious signs

The night being past, the great Sage Vishwamitra took leave of King Dasaratha and King Janaka and, blessing the princes and their sire, departed for the Himalayas to meditate there. The holy rishi being gone, King Dasaratha begged the permission of the Lord of Mithila to return to his capital. Bidding farewell to the pious king, Janaka escorted him for some distance on his way.

To the King of Ayodhya, on behalf of his daughter, King

Janaka gave a hundred thousand cows, woollen cloths, countless silken robes and richly decorated elephants, horses and chariots. He also bestowed on him male and female attendants, numberless golden coins with quantities of pearls and coral. All these and many other gifts King Janaka gave with a joyful mind, and having taken leave of King Dasaratha, returned to Mithila, whereupon King Dasaratha with his illustrious sons, preceded by the sages, started on the homeward journey, accompanied by his army.

As the sages, with Shri Ramachandra, advanced in company with the king, the screeching of strange and terrible birds was heard, while frightened deer fled across their path.

Perceiving these inauspicious signs, the king addressed Shri Vasishtha, saying: " O Holy Guru, why do the birds cry thus ominously, and the deer traverse our path? What do these omens portend? My mind is filled with anxiety, O Divine Lord."

The Maharishi Vasishtha, in gentle tones, replied: " O King, the fearful crying of the birds betokens some great danger, but the crossing of the deer from left to right indicates a speedy end to thy fears."

While they were yet speaking, the earth began to quake and and giant trees fell down, darkness covered the earth and clouds of dust veiled the sun, nor could the cardinal points be discerned. In the great dust storm that followed, the army was overwhelmed with terror and all became paralysed, save Shri Vasishtha, King Dasaratha and the princes alone.

When the dust was allayed and the army somewhat recovered, Shri Vasishtha beheld the son of Yamadagni of dreadful aspect. With matted hair, Parasurama, the humbler of the pride of kings and emperors, drew near.

The appearance of the muni resembling the splendour of Mount Kailasha or the fires of dissolution at the end of the world-period was hardly to be borne by human eyes. With his battle axe on his shoulder, bearing a mighty bow, brilliant as lightning, he appeared like Shiva about to strike down Tripura.[1]

Beholding Parasurama resembling a blazing fire, the sages reflected among themselves and said: " His father being slain,

[1] Tripura—the name of a demon slain by Shiva.

has Parasurama come again to destroy the warrior caste?" Was not his anger appeased when he formerly destroyed the whole warrior caste? Has he come again to take his revenge on us?"

Reflecting thus, they approached Parasurama with traditional offerings, saying: "O Rama, accept this arghya."

Shri Parasurama accepting the offering, then addressed Shri Rama.

CHAPTER 75

He challenges Rama to combat

"O RAMA, O Illustrious Hero, I have heard of thy great prowess. I have also been acquainted with thy heroic deed, the breaking of the bow at Janakapura, verily a feat exciting wonder and surpassing imagination. Having heard of thine achievement, I, taking this other bow, have come hither. With this terrible bow named Yamadagni, show thy strength, O Rama, and placing an arrow in it, discharge it. Should'st thou be able to accomplish this, I will engage in honourable combat with thee."

Hearing these words, King Dasaratha, became dejected and humbly addressed the rishi, saying: "O Holy Parasurama, thou art a great brahmin sage, it becomes thee not to show anger to warriors; be gracious unto my son, who is still a child. Thou art born in the family of Bhrigu and hast pledged thyself to Indra to bear arms no more. Having given the dominion of the world to Kashyapa and retired to the Mahendra mountain to practise asceticism, why hast thou now come hither to destroy us? O Sage, if Rama is slain, none of us will survive."

The great son of Jamadagni, disregarding the entreaty of King Dasaratha, again addressed Rama, saying: "O Rama, these two bows of exquisite design, famed throughout the world, exceedingly powerful, were forged by Vishwakarma.[1] One of them, wielded by Shri Shiva in combat with Tripura, was broken by thee. The other, held by me, of inexpressible power, was

[1] Vishwakarma—the architect of the gods.

given to Vishnu by the gods and is known to give victory over the foe; it is equal in moment to that which thou hast broken.

"Formerly the gods asked Brahma which of the two excelled the other and Shri Brahma, acquainted with their intention, invoked a quarrel between Vishnu and Mahadeva. They entered into combat one with the other. By the shout raised by Shri Vishnu, Shri Mahadeva was struck motionless and his bow unstrung. Then the gods and rishis came to that place and caused the two gods to be reconciled. Thereafter the gods esteemed the bow of Vishnu to be the more powerful and Shri Shiva surrendered his bow to the King of Mithila, together with all its arrows.

"This bow, belonging to Vishnu, was given in ancient times by that god to Richika and he gave it to his son Jamadagni, my father. He having renounced the bearing of weapons, retired to practise austerity, when the rash and foolish monarch Sahasravaku slew him. Hearing of the cruel death of my sire, I successively destroyed the warrior caste, from generation to generation, thus acquiring dominion over the earth. I conferred this great dominion as a gift on the Sage Kashyapa at the completion of a sacrifice, and retired to the Mahendra mountain, cheerfully observing the practice of Yoga. To-day, O Valiant Prince, acquainted with thy great achievement, I have come hither to behold thee. Receive this bow, bestowed on my ancestors by Shri Vishnu and in the spirit of a warrior, place an arrow on it. If thou succeed in drawing the bow, I will challenge thee to fight."

CHAPTER 76

Parasurama is vanquished and deprived of his glory and power

HEARING these words, Shri Rama having regard for the presence of his sire, answered with restraint, saying: "O Parasurama, thy deeds are known to me, as also the avenging of thy fathers' murderers. Methinks thou dost deem me lacking in valour,

I, a kshatriya, and a descendant of the Solar race. O Rishi, witness my prowess."

Having spoken thus, Shri Ramachandra, incensed, seized the bow and arrows from the rishi's hands and stringing it, placed an arrow on it. While drawing the mighty bow, the son of Dasaratha addressed the rishi with defiance, saying: " O Sage, thou art a brahmin and as such do I honour thee; thou art further a kinsman of Shri Vishwamitra, therefore I shall not slay thee with this arrow, but by this shaft I will rob thee of the power of motion so that thou shalt no longer be able to travel through space, or I will banish thee from those high regions to which thou hast attained by the practice of penance. Say, what is thy desire? This divine arrow of Vishnu, possessing the power of vanquishing the strength and pride of the foe, may not be restored by me to the quiver, till it has accomplished its great purpose."

When Rama placed the arrow in the sacred bow, Brahma, with the gods, assembled to behold that glorious deed, followed by the gandharvas, apsaras, yakshas and other beings. Shri Ramachandra, having taken up the mighty bow, the three worlds began to tremble and Parasurama, bereft of his divine power, stood aghast. Deprived of his glory and powerless, Shri Parasurama with humble entreaty, addressed the lotus-eyed Rama:—

" When the dominion of the earth was given by me to the sage Kashyapa, he said ' Thou must not inhabit this kingdom '. Therefore, O Rama, in obedience to the sage, I do not stay on the earth by night. This world is no longer mine, but belongs to Kashyapa. O Rama, do not deprive me of the power of movement, but allow me speedily to return to the beautiful Mahendra mountain. Thou can'st deprive me of the merits earned by the practice of Yoga. I know Thee to be the Imperishable, Thou art verily Vishnu Himself, none but Thou could'st wield this bow. O Son of Raghu, the gods have assembled to behold Thee; Thou art pre-eminent in combat, and the conqueror of Thine enemies. O Virtuous Prince, to be defeated by Thee is no ignominy; discharge Thy matchless arrow and I will return to the Mahendra mountain."

Thereupon Shri Ramachandra discharged the arrow and the merit of Parasurama was rendered void, whereupon he speedily departed to the Mahendra mountain.

The darkness being dispelled and the whole world once more filled with light, Rama was worshipped by the gods and rishis, and Shri Parasurama having circumambulated the son of Dasaratha, returned to his own hermitage.

CHAPTER 77

King Dasaratha with his army, the princes and their brides, return to Ayodhya

SHRI PARASURAMA having departed, Shri Rama delivered the bow and arrows as a trust to the god Varuna. Having offered salutations to Shri Vasishtha and the other sages he, seeing his father filled with apprehension, addressed him, saying: " Sire, Shri Parasurama has now gone, do thou command thine army to proceed towards Ayodhya."

King Dasaratha, hearing Rama's words, embraced him and reflected that his son was born to him a second time. Then summoning his army to advance, he in a chariot, adorned with banners, to the fanfare of trumpets proclaiming victory, entered Ayodhya.

The streets of the city sprinkled with water and flowers, appeared beautiful, and the citizens rejoicing at the return of their sovereign, greeted him with shouts of welcome.

Met by the brahmins inhabiting the city, the king with his friends and relatives, followed by the princes and their brides, entered the royal palace which was white as snow.

There, the kindred of the king welcomed him with garlands and sandalwood. The Queens Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi received the brides and conducted the fortunate Sita, the illustrious Urmila, and the two daughters of Kushadwaj to their palace, with auspicious rites. Arrayed in sumptuous silken robes, and borne to the temple to worship the holy images, the

brides then offered respectful salutations to their mother-in-laws, and others worthy of honour. Thereafter, each began to live with her lord in her own palace.

Shri Ramachandra with the other princes, possessing the knowledge of the use of weapons and the science of defence, passed the time with their friends in attendance on their aged sire.

After some time, King Dasaratha said to his son Bharata: " O my Son, thy maternal uncle, who came for the purpose of taking thee to his home, still tarries in the capital, therefore, go with him to see thy grandfather."

Prince Bharata and Prince Shatrughna prepared to start on their journey and took leave of their father and their highly compassionate brother Rama.

Bharata being gone, Shri Rama and Lakshmana ministered to the aged king as if he were a god and in his name performed charitable deeds among the people of the city.

Rama also ministered to his mother with deep affection, and served his Guru with single-minded devotion. His noble behaviour gratified the king, the brahmins, merchants and other castes; his sweet disposition and pious conduct charmed the people of the capital. Rama, wholly devoted to truth was renowned for his virtue, and endowed with every excellent quality like Swayambhu[1]-Brahma himself.

For a long time did Shri Rama enjoy a life of content with Sita. To him, she was dear beyond all things and he surrendered his whole heart to her. Love is enhanced by beauty, virtue and gentleness, and Sita possessed all these in an equal degree with Rama. Lovely as a goddess, Shri Sita was able to discern the thoughts of her lord before he expressed them. The beautiful Sita with Shri Ramachandra wholly satisfied, resembled Lakshmi, the consort of the incomparable Vishnu.

[1] Swayambhu—the Imperishable or Self-existent, a name of Brahma, the creator.

END OF BALA KANDA

BOOK II

AYODHYA KANDA

CHAPTER I

King Dasaratha desires to see Prince Rama made regent, and summons a council

THE great souled Bharata affectionately requested the pious Shatrughna to accompany him, on the journey to his maternal grandfather.

Enjoying abundant hospitality and held by their uncle Ashwapati in all affection, the two brothers dwelt there happily. Satisfied with the love and entertainment bestowed on them, they daily remembered their royal sire, the aged monarch, and the king also thought of his sons, now in a distant country.

The four sons of the aged king were as dear to him as his own four arms issuing from his body, yet Rama resembling Brahma, endowed with every good attribute, was dearest to his sire. Shri Rama, the eternal Purusha,[1] the Lord Vishnu himself, descended on earth on the entreaty of the gods, to slay Ravana, the enemy of the whole world.

The charming Queen Kaushalya, glowing with maternal love for her son Ramachandra, resembled Aditi at the birth of Indra.

Unequalled in beauty, brave and chivalrous, never speaking ill of others, Rama inherited the virtues of his illustrious father; of a cheerful disposition, speaking soft words to all, never returning a harsh answer when treated with contumely; when injured, pardoning the offender and remembering the offence no more; showing gratitude for the least of favours and devoting his leisure from affairs of state to seeking the friendship of those eminent in wisdom, learning, age and conduct. Wise and generous, he was foremost in addressing others, speaking with affection; supremely courageous yet not rendered vain-glorious by his own powers; never uttering falsehood, honouring the learned and the aged, showing regard for his people who

[1] Purusha—literally lord of the city of nine gates, i.e. the body—the dweller in the body as the indwelling Lord.

were devoted to him; having overcome wrath; surpassingly compassionate, venerating the brahmins; showing extreme pity for the poor; well-versed in public and individual responsibilities, fulfilling his domestic duties, not only to add lustre to the dynasty but also to attain an exalted state in the other world. Wise in the discharge of his obligations; as a Scion of the House of Ikshwaku, proving himself tender and loving to those who sought his protection; restraining the evil-doer; ever seeking the weal of his subjects; eschewing frivolous pursuits and shallow talk; neither hearing nor speaking aught against dharma; in debate equal in eloquence to Brihaspati; free from infirmities; youthful, handsome, having knowledge of time and space and being able to divine the contents of a man's heart at a single glance; verily a great sage and for his marvellous qualities as dear to the people as life itself. Profoundly learned in the science and the philosophy of the Veda, which he had studied with his spiritual preceptor, he even excelled his father in the art of warfare. The repository of all auspiciousness, virtuous, cheerful, truthful and guileless; having received full instruction from the learned brahmins in sacred and secular policy, knowing the significance of virtue, material prosperity and enjoyment; of prodigious memory, conversant with worldly wisdom, possessing a pleasing disposition, gentle, able to conceal his thoughts; recognizing when to refuse and when to accept material gifts; winning many friends, firm in his devotion to his Guru and to God, countenancing no sin; never uttering a bitter word or one which would agitate the hearts of others; energetic, deploring his own faults whilst excusing those of others; a great advocate, grateful, lending support to those he held in affection; in all circumstances true to his word; capable of protecting the interests of his family and friends; knowing how to meet out retribution to the wicked. Acquiring wealth by just means, and appreciating how to distribute it with discrimination. Proficient in the Veda, following the literary and dramatic arts with enthusiasm, endowed with the gift of oratory in Sanskrita and his own native tongue; depending on right alone for felicity and prosperity; prudent, accomplished in sport, music and painting; an incomparable rider whether mounted on horse or elephant; skilled in archery, renowned

in the field, forestalling the enemy in attack and knowing how to destroy his defences; fired with righteous wrath when engaging in combat, so that neither god nor titan could withstand him; speaking nought against any; free from pride and envy; ever submissive, yet overruled in his resolve by none; pre-eminent among his people; renowned in the three worlds; in forbearance resembling the earth, in wisdom equal to Brihaspati, in courage like unto Indra.

Shining resplendent like the full moon in the love of his people and his sire, worshipped for his excellent qualities, his matchless valour and his integrity, the earth desired to make him her lord.

Seeing his illustrious son manifesting these qualities, King Dasaratha began to reflect in this wise: "I have become old and have ruled a full measure of years. I desire to see Rama crowned while I yet live!"

This inclination grew in the mind of the king, and he waited eagerly for the time when he might resign his throne in favour of Rama. He reflected: "Rama, resembling a cloud, raining compassion on all; beloved far beyond myself; in valour equal to Yama and Indra, in understanding like Brihaspati, in endurance like unto a mountain, exceeding myself in excellent attributes; on him do I desire to confer the dominion of the earth; this will be my heaven."

Then that great sovereign summoning his ministers communicated to them his resolve to proclaim Rama, endowed with those powers, rare even in a king, and a mine of surpassing virtues, as heir-apparent.

At that time, inauspicious portents appeared on the earth, and in the heavens, and the king, conscious that he had grown old, reflected that by bestowing the throne on Rama, he would gratify his comely son, and also assuage his own sorrow and benefit his people. Filled with affection for his subjects, and for their good, he desired to increase their felicity by installing Rama as heir-apparent, when the hour was auspicious.

Summoning the subject princes and the inhabitants of other cities and lands with due respect, the aged monarch entertained them in his palaces, bestowing on them gifts of various kinds, but the sovereign of Kaikeya and the king of Mithila were not

informed of the occasion since they would hear of it thereafter. Seated in the assembly, the king resembled Prajapati in the midst of his subjects.

The kings of the earth coming together in council, King Dasaratha occupying the throne and they taking the places prepared for them, reverently faced the royal dais, observing the traditions of the court. Surrounded by his feudal lords and the elders, the king appeared like Indra sitting among the gods.

CHAPTER 2

The elders and councillors willingly accept Shri Rama as regent

In ringing tones, King Dasaratha addressed the leaders of the people seated before him, uttering words delighting their hearts.

When the aged monarch began to speak, his words resembled the beat of drums, or the crashing of thunder, yet they were filled with great sweetness withal and uttered in the manner of a king. He said: "It is well known to you that this vast empire was upheld by my predecessors and their fathers before them. To promote the prosperity and felicity of the kingdom, formerly protected by the Kings of Ikshwaku, I, walking in the path trodden by my forbears, have preserved it to the utmost. Having passed sixty thousand years under the royal canopy, my body has become old and feeble and seeks repose. The burdens of state, not able to be sustained by those of uncontrolled mind, have I borne, and now am weary. To-day, therefore, with the approval of the learned brahmins present here and for the good of my people, I desire to surrender the dominion to the protection of my eldest son. Possessing every essential virtue, Shri Ramachandra, my beloved son, equal to Indra in prowess and the conqueror of his foes, excelling in every virtue, resembles the moon accompanied by the Pushya[1] star.

[1] Pushya—name of the sixth lunar mansion, also a constellation of three stars.

"I desire to install as regent,[2] Rama, exalted among men, elder brother of Lakshmana, worthy to be your protector. In truth, I verily believe that not only the earth, but the three worlds will regard him as their lord. Desiring the joy of the universe, I shall lay upon him the weight of government and thus be freed from anxiety concerning the kingdom.

"If this seems proper to you, give me your counsel or say what should otherwise be done. Though this be my decree, yet should you judge aught else to be a better way, then speak that I may know of it. The best course is well known to be determined after careful deliberation."

Hearing the words of King Dasaratha, the other monarchs and elders cried in unison, "Excellent, Excellent!" Upon this, a sound like distant thunder, pleasant to hear, or like the cry of peacocks delighting in the storm, arose. Thereafter, the purpose of the sovereign being communicated to all, acclamations burst forth that shook the foundations of the palace.

Then the learned brahmins, the ministers, kings and the elders of the city assembled for consultation with those who had come from afar, and being of one mind, after due deliberation, thus addressed the king:—

"O Mighty Sovereign, thou hast ruled for thousands of years and have now become old, do thou, therefore, appoint Rama as regent. It is our cherished desire that the glorious Prince Rama should be seen by us, riding on an elephant beneath the royal canopy."

The king, wishing to fathom their true motives, replied with candour, saying: "Acting on my suggestion, you have all expressed your willingness to see Rama appointed regent, yet there is still some uncertainty in my mind; tell me frankly why you desire to see Rama crowned. Have I erred? Have I failed to govern righteously?"

Then the elders of the people and the counsellors answered the sagacious sovereign Dasaratha in this wise: "O King, thy son is endowed with excellent attributes. Hear of the divine and amiable qualities of the wise and perfect Ramachandra, qualities endearing him to all and pleasing to record.

[2] Regent—Yuvaraja = heir-apparent.

" In his love and zeal for truth, he is equal to Indra. Thou, O King, art exalted above all in the House of Ikshwaku, yet none in the world practises righteousness as does Shri Rama.

" By his conduct, he has added lustre to virtue and prosperity. Diffusing happiness among his people, he resembles the moon delighting the earth. In forbearance, he is like the earth, in wisdom like Brihaspati, in valour like Indra. With a deep regard for truth, free from envy and jealousy, his disposition is excellent.

" Forgiving every injury, a comforter of the afflicted and the distressed, he addresses all with gentleness. Acknowledging every favour received in full measure, self-controlled, true to his word whatever betide, speaking no ill of others, of candid utterance, full of wisdom he ever reveres the aged.

" Of immeasurable renown, Shri Rama, whose glory and splendour constantly increase, who in the science of archery is superior even to the gods, asuras and men, who has studied all the branches of learning and the Veda, is also unequalled in the art of music. The abode of peace and prosperity, ever courteous, humble and wise, and who, having received the highest instruction from the brahmins, is skilful in expounding the meaning of the Veda.

" When in company with Lakshmana, he goes to the attack, storming towns and villages, he never withdraws without wholly defeating the enemy. Returning triumphant, he enquires after the welfare of his subjects as if they were his own sons, and gives special thought to the well-being of women, servants and his disciples as a father regards the needs of his family.

" O Sire, Shri Rama graciously enquires respecting our own disciples whether they render us proper service and hospitality and further discharge their duties faithfully.

" He suffers with the afflicted and rejoices like a parent when his people hold a festival. That mighty archer, the observer of truth, the servant of the aged, who blesses all those who seek his protection, is wholly righteous. Performing noble deeds, he will not hear or utter words that create discord. Possessing a charming brow and large eyes, in this resembling Vishnu himself, Rama, by the process of deduction, is able to converse with eloquence. By his courage, prowess, self-reliance and patience, he has become the delight of his people.

" Ever ready to serve his subjects, scorning sensual pleasures, he is able to rule the three worlds, how much more this tiny earth ?

" His joy and anger are never excited without cause. He destroys those meriting death, but shows mercy to the innocent.

" Liberal to those who have found favour with him ; willing to suffer in the exercise of self-control ; beloved of his subjects, he evokes devotion in every virtuous heart.

" Brilliant as the moon by reason of his excellent attributes, the earth claims him as her lord.

" O King, thou art fortunate in possessing this great son who resembles Kashyapa, the son of Marichi. The people of Ayodhya and the citizens of the kingdom of Koshala continually pray for Rama's life and well-being.

" Men, women, the aged and those from far and near, at dawn and eventide, unitedly pray to all the gods that Shri Rama may ever be attended by prosperity. O Great King, graciously accede to our request. O Giver of boons, we beg thee to install Shri Rama as regent without delay. Thy son, resembling Shri Vishnu himself, is benevolent and generous to all. O King, do this with a cheerful mind."

CHAPTER 3

The king resolves Shri Rama shall be installed

To those who with joined palms were making this petition, King Dasaratha answered courteously :—

" To-day, indeed, I am happy and fortunate since the people desire my son, Shri Rama, to be proclaimed regent."

Thus, in the presence of his subjects, the king in gracious accents addressed Shri Vasishtha, Vamadeva and other sages :—

" In this month of Chitra, when the woods are beautiful with flowering trees, be pleased, O Holy Ones, to prepare all things for the installation of my son as heir-apparent."

After the king had spoken, the people applauded, and when the shouts of acclamation had died away, the monarch addressed the mighty Sage Vasishtha, saying: " O Blessed Lord, it is meet that thou shouldest order those things needful for the coronation ceremony."

Then Shri Vasishtha commanded the ministers in attendance to provide gold, gems, unguents, garlands of white flowers, parched rice, honey and clarified butter in separate vessels, also new cloths, chariots, weapons of all kinds, a complete army, elephants free from any imperfection, white flags, a white canopy, chamaras,[1] a hundred vessels of gold shining like fire, bulls with gilded horns, lion skins and other requisites.

Then the Sage Vasishtha commanded them, saying: " Place all these in the king's sacred pavilion. Let every gate in the capital and the private apartments of the palace be decorated with garlands and sandalwood, and let fragrant incense be kindled everywhere.

"O Ye Accomplished Ministers, provide sweet and health-giving foods, milks and curds in attractive dishes sufficient to feed a hundred thousand brahmins. To-morrow the holy brahmins should be respectfully served with butter, curdled milk and parched rice, and presented with as much dakshina as will preserve them from want for the remainder of their lives.

" To-morrow, early in the morning, the Peace Chant should be recited, therefore, let the holy brahmins be invited and their seats prepared. Let banners and arches of flowers be displayed everywhere, and the roads sprinkled with water. Let beautifully attired singing girls with their attendants wait at the gates of the palace; let food and cooling drinks be provided at all the principal crossroads, also gifts of money and ritual objects that are considered sacred; let fruit and flowers be sent separately; let armed warriors clothed in clean raiment and armed with scimitars, wait in the courtyard of the king."

In this manner, Shri Vasishtha and Shri Vamadeva performed all that had been required by the king and, everything being carried out to their satisfaction, they informed the great monarch accordingly. Then the illustrious sovereign said to the prime minister Sumantra: " Let the accomplished Prince Rama be brought

[1] Chamaras—Whisks made of yaks' tails.

here with all speed." Acquiescing in the royal command, Sumantra brought thither in a royal chariot that great warrior, Shri Rama. Surrounded by the rulers of the earth, the east, the west, the north and the south, the kings of aryan and non-aryan descent and those from the forests and the hills, King Dasaratha looked like Indra in the midst of the gods.

He beheld his son Shri Ramachandra, handsome, valorous, of mighty length of arm, fearless, walking like an intoxicated elephant, his countenance resembling the moon, fair to look upon, captivating the hearts of all by his virtue and generosity, refreshing his subjects as clouds refresh those afflicted with the heat.

The monarch could not gaze sufficiently on his beloved son as he, attended by Sumantra who followed him with reverence, alighted from his chariot and ascended the steps of the royal palace which resembled Mount Kailasha. Approaching the king he announced his name and made profound obeisance at his feet.

Seeing the prince standing respectfully at his side, the king embraced him and asked him to occupy the golden throne set with jewels and gold. Raghava thus seated looked like the sun rising on the Sumeru mountain. The whole assembly was illumined by the presence of Shri Rama who resembled the moon riding in the autumn sky filled with innumerable stars.

As a man adorned with many ornaments is overjoyed with delight to see his own image reflected in a mirror, so was King Dasaratha filled with ineffable delight when beholding the glory of his son; and like Kashyapa addressing Indra, the mighty sovereign smilingly spoke to Rama :—

" O My Son, thou art the offspring of my chief queen and do resemble her, thou art exceedingly dear to me, endowed as thou art with all the great attributes, thou hast imbued thy people with thy noble qualities; accept therefore the high office of regent. Notwithstanding, My Son, that thou art by nature endowed with all good qualities and art humble, yet hear while I tell thee that which is for thy good.

" Keep far from thee those evil habits born of love, pleasure and anger; through thy secret service acquaint thyself closely with all the happenings of thy kingdom and other domains,

as though they took place before thine eyes. Give pleasure to thy people by filling the various storehouses and arsenals. O Prince, that sovereign who rules his subjects with due regard to their happiness causes his friends to rejoice like the gods who have drunk the nectar of immortality. Wherefore, O my Child, conduct thyself with a mind fully subdued."

Then, the friends of Rama acquainted Queen Kaushalya of the king's resolve and she rewarded the messengers of these good tidings with many cows and gems.

Shri Rama, hearing the king's words, answered: "So be it," and, bowing to the great monarch, left the palace in his chariot, the people greeting him with joy as he passed by.

Satisfied with the sovereign's decree, they acclaimed him with salutations and returning to their homes worshipped their gods, propitiating them so that no impediment should arise in the installation of Shri Rama as regent.

CHAPTER 4

Shri Rama and Princess Sita prepare for the ceremony

The citizens having departed, the king again consulted his ministers, saying to them: "To-morrow, the Pushya star is in the ascendant, I decree, therefore, that the lotus-eyed Rama shall then be installed as my successor."

Dismissing his counsellors, the king, entering the inner apartment, commanded Sumantra to bring Rama to him once more. In obedience to the command of his royal master, Sumantra repaired to the palace of Rama, to bring him thither.

Rama, hearing the doorkeeper announce the second visit of the minister, became anxious and sending for him with all haste inquired of him the purport of his coming. Sumantra answered, saying: "The king desires to see thee." Shri Rama thereupon hastily repaired to the palace of his royal parent.

King Dasaratha retiring to the private apartment, issued instructions that Rama should be brought thither. The prince,

entering his father's palace, bowed low, with joined palms, from a distance, and contemplated his sire.

The king, raising him up, embraced him and, giving him a seat, again addressed him :—

" O Prince, I have now grown old and have ruled long, enjoying all the pleasures of the heart. I have also performed hundreds of sacrifices and distributed great quantities of food and lavish gifts as alms to the brahmins. O Great One, a son such as thou art, is the fruit of much charity and study of the Veda. O Most Excellent One, what I desired to give in charity, I have given, and I have studied the Veda and offered up many sacrifices. My desire for pleasure is past; I have discharged every obligation to the gods, the sages, my ancestors and the learned brahmins, nothing remains to be accomplished by me but thine installation. O My Son, hear me, it is the will of my people that thou become their sovereign; I shall, therefore, install thee as my successor. Nevertheless, O Rama, fearful dreams have visited me at night, attended by the roar of thunder and the falling of meteors, signs betokening opposition. O Rama, the star of my birth is surrounded by the sun, Mars and Rahu; those versed in divination speak of it as of evil augury, that portends either the death of a king or the visitation of some grave calamity. O Prince of Raghu, I desire to see thee crowned before my senses fail. Verily, the mind of man is inconstant. To-day, the astrologers announce that Purnavasu is in the ascendant, but to-morrow it will be the Pushya star, auspicious to thy coronation. I desire thee, therefore, to be proclaimed regent to-morrow. Do thou, from now on, fast with thy spouse, passing the night on a bed of kusha grass, with a stone for thy pillow. It is the duty of the friends surrounding thee to guard thee. In such undertakings many obstructions arise.

" Prince Bharata is in the city of his grandsire, it is my will that thou be installed in his absence. Thy brother, Bharata, is virtuous, compassionate, master of his senses and obedient to thee, yet, O Prince, I know the mind of man to be fickle, even the mind of a righteous and devout man may be subject to inconstancy. To-morrow, thy coronation shall take place, therefore, now return to thy abode."

King Dasaratha having thus spoken, Shri Rama left for his palace. Entering his own abode, anxious to acquaint Janaki with the king's proposal and not finding the princess in her own apartment, Rama repaired to the palace of his mother. There he beheld the Queen Kaushalya, seated in the temple, observing the vow of silence and praying for her son's welfare. Acquainted with the sovereign's decree, Shri Lakshmana and Sumitra were already in the palace of the chief queen, and Sita also having been summoned thither was sitting at her side.

Queen Kaushalya attended by Queen Sumitra, Lakshmana and Sita, having heard that Shri Rama would be installed when the Pushya star was in the ascendant, was meditating on Narayana,[1] with closed eyes and controlled breathing.

Shri Rama, approaching his mother, paid reverence to her and joyfully exclaimed: "O Mother, my father has commanded me to serve the people and to-morrow I am to take up the burden of government. Shri Vasishtha, my preceptor, and other sages have ordained that the Princess Sita should, this night, fast with me. At dawn, the Princess Sita and I will carry out those prayers and rites proper to the occasion."

Queen Kaushalya, long desirous of this event, with tears of joy flowing from her eyes, answered: "O My Beloved Son Rama, mayest thou live long and may all thine enemies perish. Acquiring the throne, mayest thou bring joy to thy friends, relatives and also Queen Sumitra. O Child, surely thou wert born under an auspicious star since thou hast won favour with thy royal sire by thine excellent attributes. The purpose of my devotion and austerity, undertaken to please the lotus-eyed Narayana, has been fulfilled to-day inasmuch as thou art about to obtain the kingdom of the dynasty of Raghu."

Shri Rama listening to his mother's words, smilingly addressed Shri Lakshmana, he who ever paid honour to his father, and said: "O Lakshmana, share with me the government of the kingdom, thou art my second self, the dominion is equally thine. O Brother, I desire life and a kingdom for thy sake."

Thereafter, Shri Rama, bowing to the two queens, with their permission withdrew with Sita to his own apartment.

[1] Narayana—a name of the Lord, the waters (nara) being His first centre of motion.

CHAPTER 5

On Vasishtha's advice they observe a fast

KING DASARATHA, having acquainted his son Rama with the knowledge of his approaching regency, now called his spiritual preceptor, Shri Vasishtha, and addressed him, saying : " O Sage, whose only wealth is austerity, graciously approach Shri Rama and cause him to observe a fast with Princess Sita in preparation for his coronation."

Shri Vasishtha answering, " Be it so ", went himself to Shri Rama's palace. Ascending a chariot drawn by two horses, he drove to the palace, and entering by the three gates, approached the abode of Raghava, white as a cloud.

Shri Rama hearing of the arrival of his preceptor, speedily went forth to welcome him and offer him due obeisance. Taking him by the hand, he assisted him to alight from the chariot and, studying his mood, made enquiries as to his well-being.

The venerable Vasishtha said : " O Rama, thy royal parent is gracious to thee, to-morrow thou shalt be proclaimed ruler of the kingdom, do thou observe a fast to-day. To-morrow, King Dasaratha will install thee as regent, as Nahusha of old made over his kingdom to Yayati."

Having uttered these words, the knower of truth, the sovereign of munis, requested Rama and Sita to observe a fast that night.

Then Shri Ramachandra respectfully saluted Shri Vasishtha, and the royal preceptor accepting his salutation departed for his abode.

Conversing delightfully with his friends, Shri Rama, when requested by them, retired to the inner apartments. The palace of Raghava was crowded with joyful men and women, and resembled a lake filled with lotuses visited by innumerable birds.

Leaving the palace, Shri Vasishtha perceived the streets to be filled with people. All the roads entering Ayodhya were so crowded with spectators eager to witness Shri Rama's coronation that none could pass to and fro without difficulty. The sound of the multitudes shouting with joy, filling the highways, resembled the roaring of the sea.

All the streets of the capital were swept and sprinkled with water; on either side, flower garlands were hanging, and every house was decorated with flags and banners. Men and women, children and the aged, all anxiously awaiting the dawn, so that they might witness the sacred ceremony, looked forward with eagerness to the great festival that would promote their happiness.

The priest Shri Vasishtha, avoiding the crowded streets, at length reached the royal palace. Ascending the balcony which resembled a white cloud, he greeted the king as Brihaspati pays homage to Indra.

Seeing the sage approaching, the king rose and enquired as to what Shri Rama had said. Shri Vasishtha answered, "All is prepared". As the king rose from his throne, the whole assembly stood up to honour the venerable sage.

Having heard his spiritual preceptor's report, the king, dismissing the court, withdrew to the inner apartment, as a lion enters its cave. Entering those gorgeous and richly ornamented apartments equal to one of Indra's palaces, he resembled the moon gliding through the heavens.

CHAPTER 6

The city of Ayodhya is decorated for the proclamation

SHRI VASISHTHA having taken his departure, Shri Ramachandra and the large-eyed Sita purified themselves, and mentally adored the Lord Narayana. Offering salutations to the vessel containing the sacrificial oblation and to propitiate Narayana, Shri Rama poured clarified butter into the sacred fire. Thereafter partaking of the remainder of the offering and praying for what was auspicious, seated on the kusha grass, he meditated on Shri Narayana. Observing silence with purified minds, the prince and princess slept in the temple. Three hours before the dawn, they rose and caused their servants to clean and decorate the palace. Then, after listening to the recitation of the dynastic ballads causing them great delight, they performed their morning

devotions and silently repeated the Gayatri. As the sun rose, clad in silken garments, they saluted Shri Narayana abiding in the golden orb and then instructed the learned brahmins to recite the Peace Chant and other prayers.

The deep and melodious sound of the Peace Chant, recited by the brahmins, mingling with the beat of drums, filled the capital of Ayodhya. The inhabitants of the city, knowing that Rama and Sita were observing a fast and offering devotion to the Lord, were filled with joy.

On the dawning of day, the citizens brought banyan trees, setting them up as pillars to adorn the city for the coming coronation. The high temples resembling the Himalayan peaks, the stately houses, the highways, the crescents and streets, the shops filled with merchandise, the mansions where members of the royal family dwelt, the public assembly halls and the tall trees were all hung with flags of different colours which fluttered in the breeze. Here and there, companies of actors and dancers gave pleasure to the people by singing sweetly and playing melodiously on their instruments. In the market, in the houses, at home and abroad, all spoke only of the coming proclamation of Shri Rama as ruler. Children playing in front of their homes also chattered about this matter.

In honour of the occasion, the roads were strewn with flowers, and rendered fragrant with incense and pleasant odours ; lamps were placed here and there lest the royal procession should pass through at night.

Having decorated the city, the inhabitants awaiting the proclamation, came together in public assemblies or stood on raised tribunes. Praising King Dasaratha, they said : " That mighty King Dasaratha of the dynasty of Ikswaku is indeed a pious man. Realising he has grown old, he, himself, is installing Rama as ruler. How gracious is our king that he is placing us under the rule of Shri Ramachandra. May the Lord long protect the prince as our ruler. Shri Rama is simple, highly learned, devoted to righteousness and affectionate to his brothers. Virtuous and wise, Shri Rama loves us as his own brethren. May the righteous and sinless King Dasaratha live long, by whose grace, we see Rama enthroned to-day."

Hearing the praises of King Dasaratha by the people, those

living far distant were attracted to the holy ceremony and flocked to see the royal procession, filling the city of Ayodha Puri.

On the day of the full moon, the tumult of the multitude was like the roar of the ocean. People coming from far and near to Ayodhya which resembled the city of Amaravati, enhanced the beauty of the capital as aquatic creatures add to the beauty of the sea.

CHAPTER 7

The hunchback maid, Manthara, informs Queen Kaikeyi of Shri Rama's coming installation

At this time, Queen Kaikeyi had a female servant who had accompanied her from the abode of her royal parent and was ever in attendance on the queen. Her name was Manthara.

By chance, ascending the balcony of the palace which resembled the full moon, she perceived the capital of Ayodhya adorned with garlands of lotuses and the principal streets sprinkled with water. Flags were fluttering from the tops of the tall houses, the roads levelled, and the wide streets crowded with people. Holy brahmins carrying auspicious gifts were waiting to offer them to Shri Ramachandra; the temples were painted white and strains of musical instruments resounded everywhere. Elated by the festivities, joyful crowds were singing the Vedic mantras and not only men but elephants, horses and cattle demonstrated their joy in their own peculiar fashion. Large flags bound with flowers were being carried by joyous citizens wandering here and there.

Manthara was amazed to see these unusual activities and, meeting Shri Rama's royal nurse gaily dressed in a white silken robe, she enquired of her, saying: "Why is the wealthy Queen Kaushalya, mother of Shri Rama, distributing immense riches in charity to-day? Why are the people of the capital so joyous? What is the happy king about to accomplish?"

The royal nurse, overcome with joy at that time, told the

hunchbacked Manthara of Rama's enthronement. She said: "To-morrow, at dawn, under the Pushya star, King Dasaratha will install the sinless Rama, the subduer of anger, as Yuvaraja."

The words of the nurse filled the hunchbacked woman with jealous wrath. Speedily descending from the high palace which resembled Mt. Kailasa, that sinful woman, consumed with malice, entered the bedchamber of Queen Kaikeyi and, waking her, thus addressed her:—

"Why art thou sleeping, O Deluded One? Thou art in imminent peril; art thou blind to future suffering? O Fair One, the good fortune which thou vauntest is about to pass away, like a river that is dried up in the summer season."

Queen Kaikeyi, pained by the bitter words of the sinful hunchbacked maid, answered her saying: "O Manthara, is all well? Why do I behold thee with a gloomy mien, what is the cause of thy distress?"

Hearing the gentle accents of Queen Kaikeyi, Manthara, who was full of cunning, assuming a sorrowful mien and feigning friendship for the queen, spoke bitterly, "O Devi, a great calamity has befallen thee. Hear me! King Dasaratha is about to proclaim Shri Ramachandra as regent. I am immersed in the bottomless sea of fear; I am afflicted with pain and sorrow; I am as if scorched by fire, and for thy good I have come hither. O Kaikeyi, thy woes are my woes, thy sorrows my sorrows, of this I am certain. Hearken! Thou art the daughter of a great royal House and thou art the favourite of King Dasaratha. Why art thou deceived by his crafty ways? Outwardly, thy husband appears to be a speaker of truth, but, inwardly, he is a deceitful man. His speech is fair, but his heart is hard. Thy honesty is the cause of thy suffering. Prevailing on thee by specious words, the king visits thee and speaks insincere words to thee. By delivering the kingdom to Kaushalya's son, he seeks to make her mistress of all. Like an affectionate mother, thou hast nourished in thy lap the enemy that is called thy lord. Thou resemblest the one who pressed a serpent to her bosom deeming it, through illusion, to be her infant. As a snake or an enemy harms the one who has spared him, so has King Dasaratha to-day dealt with thee and thy son.

This sinful, deceitful monarch will destroy thee, thy son and thy relatives, who are worthy of happiness, by enthroning Shri Ramachandra. O Thou of Deluded Intellect, ever indifferent to thine own good, hear me, there is yet time. Whatever thou can'st do for thine own advantage perform and thus protect thy son and me."

Hearing the words of Manthara, the beautiful queen rose from her couch, like the autumnal moon. Filled with wonder and delight, she took from her person a precious ornament and presented it to the hunchback woman.

That lovely one, unequalled in beauty among youthful women, said to Manthara: " O Manthara, thou hast brought me joyful tidings. Tell me, what I can offer thee in return for these pleasing words? I find no difference between Rama and Bharata. I am, therefore, fully satisfied if the king installs Shri Ramachandra. O Dear One, nothing is more pleasing to me than the news of Shri Rama's enthronement. Ask for whatever pleases thee, and I will confer it on thee."

CHAPTER 8

Manthara persuades the queen that Bharata should be regent and Prince Rama banished

PROMPTED by disappointment and anger, Manthara, casting the jewel away, in disdain, cried: " O Foolish Queen, this is no occasion for rejoicing, dost thou know that thou art about to be submerged in a sea of sorrow? I cannot but laugh silently at thy folly. Thou rejoicest when there is reason to mourn! I pity thy simplicity, how should a woman rejoice in the advancement of the son of her enemy? Prince Bharata has an equal right to the kingdom with Ramachandra. Rama fears Prince Bharata and, fearing him, seeks to displace him. Lakshmana, though heir to the throne, is Rama's obedient servant, just as Prince Shatrughna is faithful to Bharata. O Beautiful One, by birth Bharata has a claim to the throne. Traditionally,

the kingdom should be his. Shri Rama is well-versed in affairs of state, and acts promptly in his own interests. Knowing the danger threatening Bharata from Rama, I am filled with dread.

"To-day, Queen Kaushalya is fortunate indeed; her son will be enthroned by the holy brahmins at dawn, when the Pushya star is in the ascendant. Thereafter, thou shalt have to stand in complete submission like a stone, before Queen Kaushalya whose enemies will be subdued. Thus, not only thou, but the virtuous Prince Bharata will become a servant and dependent on the Queen Kaushalya. The women of Shri Rama's household will be filled with joy, but thy daughters-in-law, having no status, will suffer great anxiety and sorrow."

Queen Kaikeyi believing Manthara really to be benevolently disposed to her, began to extol the great virtues of Ramachandra, saying: "Shri Rama instructed by his holy Guru is truly righteous, grateful, truthful and pious; he, the eldest son of the king, assuredly deserves to be made regent. May he live long! He will ever protect his brothers and servants as a father protects his children. O Kubija,[1] why art thou jealous of Rama's coronation? After a hundred years, Bharata will inherit the throne of his illustrious ancestors. Why art thou sad on such a joyful occasion, O Manthara? Shri Ramachandra is as dear to me as is Bharata, he serves me with greater zeal even than he does Queen Kaushalya. If Shri Rama ascends the throne, it is as if Bharata ruled the land; Shri Rama regards his brother as himself."

Hearing the Queen's words, Manthara intensely provoked, sighed deeply and said: "O Stupid One, thou deemest adversity to be prosperity, thou art sinking in an ocean of suffering and yet dost not perceive it. When Rama becomes king, who will succeed him, Prince Bharata or his own son? Prince Bharata will remain without a kingdom forever.

"O Beautiful Princess, all the sons of the king cannot occupy the throne, and if they could, it would bring calamity. Therefore, O Kaikeyi, the sovereign confers his throne on the eldest son; yet, if the younger son be endowed with good qualities he may succeed; the kingdom is given to one and one only. When Rama becomes king, then thy son like an orphan, deprived

[1] Kubija—hunchback.

of all comfort, will be cast forth from the royal dynasty to suffer. I have come to tell thee this for thy good and thou dost not comprehend it. If thou wert wise, thou wouldst not reward me with this jewel on account of the increased prosperity of thy rival. Assuredly when Rama assumes the regency, he will either banish Prince Bharata or have him put to death. Through proximity people acquire affection even for inanimate objects, but thou didst send thy son in his childhood to thy father's house.

"Prince Shatrughna has accompanied Bharata; Lakshmana follows Rama as Shatrughna follows Bharata. It is said that a tree marked down for felling by the dwellers of the forest is preserved by the proximity of the thorny ishika bushes. Thus will Lakshmana ever protect Rama, and Rama in return will preserve Lakshmana. These two brothers love each other as do the Aswins; this is well known. Rama will, therefore, seek to harm Bharata though he will ever protect Lakshmana. I, therefore, consider it were best for Bharata to escape to the forest. If Rama succeed to his father's kingdom, how may thy welfare and that of thy relatives be assured? To thee Bharata is a child worthy of happiness but to Rama he is a rival. When Rama is king, Bharata will not live long. It becomes thee, therefore, O Queen, to protect Prince Bharata, as the leader of a herd of elephants protects it from the lion's spring. Prompted by pride, thou hast in the past slighted Queen Kaushalya; dost thou think she will spare thee when she is chief queen? O Beautiful One, note well when Rama obtains the kingdom together with its mountains, seas and valleys, then thou and thy son, Prince Bharata, will suffer ignominy. Assuredly, when Rama is king, Prince Bharata will be deprived of life, therefore, act so that Rama may be exiled to the forest and Bharata obtain the kingdom."

CHAPTER 9

Queen Kaikeyi is resolved upon her evil design

THE face of Queen Kaikeyi flushed with anger, and sighing deeply, she said to Manthara: " To-day, I shall indeed banish Rama and ensure that Bharata be proclaimed regent. O Manthara, how may Bharata become regent, and Rama be deprived of the kingdom ? "

Hearing these words, the sinful Manthara, bent upon the complete destruction of Shri Rama, said to the queen: " Hear, O Kaikeyi, I will unfold to thee the only course which will lead to the coronation of Prince Bharata. O Kaikeyi, hast thou forgotten that which thou hast often related to me ? O Lover of Poesy, if it be thy desire to hear the tale from my lips, listen and then take action."

Thus addressed, Queen Kaikeyi, rising from her couch, replied: " O Manthara, relate by what means Bharata may acquire the throne and Shri Rama suffer eclipse."

Then the wicked Manthara, desirous of doing injury to Rama, said: " Formerly when thy husband was engaged in a war between the devas and asuras, he supported the cause of Indra. He took thee with him and I accompanied thee. O Kaikeyi, to the south, in the Dandaka forest, there ruled a king named Timidwaja in his capital Bijayanta. He was versed in the magic named Shambara, and he was unconquerable by the gods. He waged war on Indra and in the great conflict the asuras, at night, carried off the wounded from their beds and slew them. King Dasaratha fought great battles with these asuras who pierced his body many times with their weapons. He, falling unconscious, thou, O Devi, brought him from the battlefield and when they still assailed him, didst skilfully preserve him. O Beautiful One, then the king, thy lord, well pleased with thee, proffered thee two boons, and thou didst answer: ' I shall claim them when the need arises.'

" I was not then acquainted with this matter, but thou didst later relate it to me. Prompted by my love for thee, I have

treasured all this in my memory. Now, demand the cessation of preparations for Shri Rama's enthronement. For the first boon ask for the proclamation of Bharata as regent, and for the second the banishment of Rama for fourteen years. During the period of his exile, men will grow to love thy son and his rule will be assured.

"O, Daughter of a Mighty King, entering the chamber of wrath, clad in soiled raiment, cast thyself on the bare ground. On the entrance of the king, neither look at nor speak to him but, rolling on the ground, continue to weep. Doubtless thou art very dear to thy lord who, for thy sake, would enter a raging fire. The king would never provoke thee nor can he bear to see thee weep. He would sacrifice life itself for thy sake. The king cannot be indifferent to thy requests. O Indolent One, test the power of thy beauty to-day; but have a care lest the king offer thee diamonds, pearls, gold and other gems, and be not caught in the snare of greed.

"O Fortunate One, remind the king of the two boons promised to thee on the battlefield; strive hard for the success of thine undertaking. If the king would lift thee up, let him on oath renew his promise. Do thou say to him: 'O Great King, send Rama into exile for fourteen years and make Bharata ruler of the kingdom.'

"Whilst Rama is absent, the rule of Bharata will be established and he will reign forever. O Beautiful One, demand the exile of Rama, from King Dasaratha, and all will be well with thy son. Men will forget their love for Rama and will cease to care for him, and Bharata will have no enemy anywhere. When Shri Rama returns, the supremacy of Bharata will be firmly established; ruling with love, he will inspire affection and many friends will support him. Therefore, O Queen, questioned by the king, fearlessly and firmly demand that the preparations for Rama's enthronement be terminated."

Kaikeyi, thus prevailed upon to execute the evil design of Manthara and fully prepared to comply with it, followed her counsel as a young chicken follows its mother. The beautiful queen, aggrieved that the king had not consulted her concerning this great event, said: "O Manthara, thou art truly my sincere well-wisher! Of all deformed creatures on earth, thou art the

wisest. O Kubija, as yet, I fail to comprehend the king's real intention. Deformed women are usually sinful and perverse, but thou, O Kubija, art unique, resembling a lotus bending to the breeze. In spite of thy physical defect, thou art not to be despised. It would seem that thy slender waist, bashful of thy full rounded bosom, had withdrawn itself. O Manthara, thy face is like the full moon, thou art indeed lovely, thy body is smooth, thy waist decorated with a girdle, thy thighs are long, thy limbs slender. O Manthara, when thou walkest before me, clad in a silken sari, reaching to thy ankles, thou art as graceful as a swan.

"Acquainted with every grace and blandishment, thy hump protruding like the hub of a wheel is surely filled with wisdom, diplomacy and understanding. I, therefore, present thee with a gold chain to adorn it.

" O Lovely Woman, when Bharata becomes king and Rama goes into exile, I will cover thy hump with beaten gold. When I am certain of the success of my undertaking, I will apply sandalwood paste to thy hump, and to thy forehead a diadem of gold and gems.

" O Kubija, I will give thee ornaments of pure gold ; thus attired and adorned thou shalt be free to live as thou pleaseth. Thou shalt put my sister queens to shame and precede them with pride. O Thou whose face is incomparably beautiful, thou art a rival of the full moon. O Deformed One, many hunch-backed women wearing golden ornaments shall attend thee as thy handmaids."

Thus flattered, Manthara reclining on a white couch, glowing like an altar flame, spoke : " O Fortunate One, it is useless to construct a dam when the water has run away, therefore, enter on thine undertaking immediately. Go wait upon the king in the chamber of wrath."

Thus prompted by Kubija, the beautiful-eyed Queen Kaikeyi, filled with ambition, entered the chamber of wrath with Manthara. There, inspired by the hunchbacked woman, casting her pearl necklace of immeasurable value on the ground, the queen rolling on the floor, addressed her : " O Kubija, either Rama shall go into exile and Bharata obtain the kingdom, or King Dasaratha will have news of my death. I shall neither

put on ornaments, nor partake of delicious dishes; if Rama is installed, it shall be the end of my life."

Manthara continued to instruct Kaikeyi in the most cruel manner, uttering words hostile to Rama. "Know well, O Fortunate One, should Rama become ruler, it will mean endless suffering for thee and thy son. Therefore exert thyself to overthrow him."

The queen, wounded by the shafts of Manthara's words, placing both hands on her heart, replied angrily: "O Kubija, either thou shalt bear the news of my death to the king, or Rama shall be exiled and Bharata enthroned. If Rama be not exiled, then I shall neither sleep on a bed nor wear flowing garments, nor apply sandalwood paste nor antimony to my person. Except Bharata be enthroned, I shall neither eat nor drink. If this is not accomplished, I do not desire to live."

Having firmly resolved this, casting her ornaments to the ground, she, herself, lay down like a fallen kinnari.[1] Her face veiled in wrath, her body stripped of its garlands and jewels, the queen resembled the sky bereft of sun and stars.

CHAPTER 10

The king is deeply afflicted at the sight of the weeping queen

INCITED by Manthara, Kaikeyi, like a kinnari, continued to roll on the ground as if wounded by a poisoned arrow. The artful queen, devising a plan, gradually unfolded her design to Manthara. Heaving deep sighs, like a python, Manthara was filled with satisfaction, perceiving her favourite, Kaikeyi, resolved on her evil course of action.

Reflecting on the matter, torn with jealousy, the queen, plucking out her eyebrows, scattered her shining ornaments on the ground adorning it as stars illumine the firmament. Lying thus,

[1] Kinnari—mythical beings, celestial choristers, said to have sprung from the toe of Brahma.

attired in soiled raiment with her hair dishevelled, she resembled a nymph fallen from heaven.

The king, having given his instructions for the installation of Shri Rama, dismissed the court and entered the inner apartments of the queens to inform them of the great occasion.

Anxious to impart the good tidings to his beloved consorts, the illustrious King Dasaratha entered the inner apartment, first going to the beautiful abode of Kaikeyi. As the moon sails into a clear sky after eclipse, so did the king enter the apartment of Queen Kaikeyi. He passed through the garden made beautiful by parrots, peacocks, swans and cranes. Music was softly playing, while dwarfed and hunchbacked maids passed to and fro. There were leafy bowers and alcoves on whose walls were painted beautiful pictures. Everywhere champaka[1] and asoka[2] enhanced the view, whilst other trees were laden with blossom and fruit. Altars of ivory, silver and gold with springs of water flowing by seats inlaid with precious metals and costly jewels, where delicious food and drink was constantly served, transformed the palace into paradise itself.

The king entered the inner apartments, but did not perceive the queen on the couch where desire had caused him to seek her. Calling loudly and receiving no answer, he grew sad; never before had Kaikeyi missed the time of dalliance, never before had the king found the apartment deserted. The monarch desiring to know where the queen was, questioned a maidservant, who replied with fear and submission: " O Sire, she has entered the chamber of wrath."

On hearing these words, the heart of the sovereign was exceedingly troubled. Restless and agitated in mind, the king bowed with sorrow entered the chamber of wrath and found the queen lying on the ground in an unseemly manner. The king who, in his old age, loved the young queen as dearly as his own life, was deeply afflicted at the sight. That sinless monarch beheld the ambitious Kaikeyi lying on the earth like a branch torn from a tree, or a nymph thrust forth from heaven. She lay like an apsara fallen on the earth when her merit is exhausted,

[1] Champaka—magnolia, Michelia champaka.
[2] Asoka—a tree resembling the coconut.

or like a snapped garland, or a doe ensnared by the hunter, or like a young elephant wounded by a poisonous arrow.

Standing over her like an immense tusker, the monarch regarded her with affection. Gently caressing her, apprehensive yet propelled by desire, the king addressed his lotus-eyed queen : " O Devi, I know not why thou art displeased, by whom hast thou been insulted. O tell me ! O Auspicious One, I am grieved to see thee lying in the dust, why art thou, ever benevolent towards me, lying on the earth ? Thou art as dear to me as my own life, why dost thou act as one possessed by an evil spirit ? Art thou sick ? If so, I have many eminent physicians who can cure thy malady, who being satisfied with the gifts and honours bestowed on them, are ready to obey my will. In an instant they shall restore thee to health. O Beautiful One, tell me the symptoms of thy complaint. Or dost thou desire to reward or punish any man ? Do not let the charm of thy face be marred by grief.

" In order to please thee, I will put to death one who does not deserve the penalty, or will pardon one who merits death. I will reduce a rich man to poverty, or cause a pauper to be made wealthy. I and all those who belong to me are thy obedient servants. I shall never oppose thy will, O Queen. If I can please thee even at the cost of my life, thou hast but to speak. Well dost thou know how much I love thee, now tell me what I may do for thee.

" I swear to accomplish whatever thou desireth. Know me to be monarch of a kingdom on which the sun never sets. The lands of Drivira, Sindhu, Souvira, Sourashtra, Dakshinaputha, Vanga, Anga, Maghandha, Matsha, Kashi and Koshala together with their abundant produce and wealth are ruled by me. If thou desirest any of these, tell me.

" O Frail One, why dost thou cause thyself suffering ? Rise, rise, O Dearest, what dost thou fear ? O Kaikeyi, as the sun dispels the mist, I will dispel thy fears."

Thus flattered by the king, Kaikeyi appeared somewhat pacified, yet in order to afflict her lord, began to utter bitter and harsh words.

CHAPTER II

She asks for the two boons promised her by the king

THE queen addressed the great sovereign, Dasaratha, who, overcome with desire, was pierced by the shafts of Kama-deva,[1] and said: Neither am I sick nor has any offered me insult. I harbour a certain ambition which thou can'st fulfil. If thou art willing to accomplish this, then give me thy solemn promise and I will make known its purport to thee."

The resplendent monarch, agitated by desire, raising the head of the queen from the ground took her in his arms and answered smilingly: " O Fortunate One, dost thou not know that none is dearer to me than thou, saving that lion among men, Shri Ramachandra. I swear by the invincible Rama, who is even dearer to me than thou, that I will fulfil thy ambition. O Kaikeyi, I swear by Rama, without seeing whom I cannot live one hour, that I will execute thy desire. O Dear One, by my oath I have demonstrated to thee the intensity of my love, now tell me what thou desirest. Knowing the great love I bear for thee, have no fear; by my meritorious deeds I declare to thee, I will grant thee what thou asketh."

Following the instructions of Manthara, knowing the fulfilment of her ambition to be at hand and concerned with the advancement of Bharata, Kaikeyi spoke harshly. Satisfied with the attitude of the king, she, resembling the dreadful god of death, addressed him: " O Great King, formerly thou didst promise me two boons to which the thirty-three gods were witness. O King, moon, sun, ether, the planets, day and night, the cardinal points, the universe and those who inhabit it, the earth, the gandharvas, the asuras, the spirits and other beings are witness to that promise given to me by thee. O Ye Gods, listen with attention to the boons which the king, a lover of truth, highly resplendent and acquainted with the law of duty, grants me."

The Queen Kaikeyi, praising the king, who was overcome by desire and ready to grant any boon, said: " O King, recollect

[1] Kama or Kandarpa—The God of Love.

how in the war between the gods and asuras, thou didst fall wounded like one dead, and I rescued thee by applying the appropriate means? On thy recovery, thou didst promise me two boons. O Truthful Monarch, I now earnestly desire these two boons which are in thy power to grant. Shouldst thou, despite thy promises given, not fulfil these desires, then I will relinquish my life, dishonoured by thee."

The queen, holding the king's mind subject by her sweet words, resembled a hunter who, intending to slay a deer, lays a snare for it. Then addressing the king infatuated with passion and willing to grant any boon, she said :—

"O Deva, hear me, I now claim these two boons. Employing the preparations made for Rama's installation, let my son Bharata be proclaimed regent, this is the first boon. The second pledge granted me on the battlefield is now also due to be fulfilled. Let Ramachandra be exiled to the forest for fourteen years, wearing a dress of bark, with matted locks like a hermit, while my son, Prince Bharata, rules without hindrance. This is my earnest desire. Let me, this day, behold the exile of Rama. O King, Protector of Truth, preserve thy integrity and the traditions of thy birth. The rishis declare that the observance of truth is the most excellent means of attaining heaven."

CHAPTER 12

The king suffers bitterly at the thought of sending Prince Rama into exile

THE harsh words of Queen Kaikeyi caused intense suffering and agitation to the heart of the king. He began to reflect —"Am I seeing a dream by day, is my mind unhinged, am I possessed by an evil spirit, is an inauspicious star causing me distress or is this disturbance the result of some malady?"

Pondering awhile, the king grew calm, but his mind was still troubled, and, recollecting the demands of Queen Kaikeyi, he

again became restless and agitated like a deer in the presence of a lioness. Heaving deep sighs, seated on the ground, he resembled a highly venomous snake hypnotized by the power of a mantram. He cried out in anger, " Woe unto me " and fell senseless.

After a long time, he recovered consciousness, and suffering great distress, full of wrath, answered Kaikeyi, while his glance seemed as if it would consume her. " O Thou of Evil Disposition, O Destroyer of my Dynasty, what harm have Shri Ramachandra or I done to thee ? Rama has ever treated thee as his own mother. Why hast thou determined thus ? Alas ! I brought thee to my house for the destruction of my home. I deemed thee to be the daughter of a king and thou hast shown thyself to be a venomous serpent. All my people unite in praise of Rama. For what fault shall I abandon him ? It were possible for me to part with Queen Kaushalya, Sumitra, my kingdom, even life itself, but I cannot abandon Shri Rama. To behold the heir-apparent causes delight to my heart ; when not contemplating him, my mind loses its capacity to act. The world may continue to exist without the sun, crops may grow without water, but I cannot live even for a little while without Shri Ramachandra.

" Therefore, O Sinful One, give up thine arrogance. See, I put my head at thy feet, be gracious to me. Why hast thou determined on this cruelty, O Wicked One ? If thou desireth to test my love for Prince Bharata, then do so. When thou didst say betimes that Rama, my eldest son, was entitled to the kingdom on account of his virtues, didst thou utter these words in flattery to gratify me or to exact some service of Rama ?

" The tidings of Rama's installation is causing thee a burning discontent. Possessed by an evil spirit, thou art not thyself, I wean. O Devi, it is a great calamity that the House of Ikshwaku, famed for its probity, should fall into disrepute.

" Hadst thou not been afflicted by an evil spirit or influenced by an inauspicious planet, thou wouldst never have spoken to the detriment of others. It is certain that thou art possessed by a malignant entity. O Child, thou hast often said that thou didst love Shri Ramachandra, even as Bharata himself. O Devi, how dost thou dare to seek the banishment of Ramachandra

for fourteen years? How canst thou demand the exile of the virtuous and tender Ramachandra for fourteen long years? O Thou of beautiful eyes, how canst thou think of sending Rama into exile, who ever honours thee? Rama has paid thee greater respect than Bharata. I fail to comprehend how thou canst desire his exile. Reflect well, none in the world will offer thee greater service, respect and obedience than Rama.

"Among the thousands of women and maid-servants in my private apartments, none ever speaks ill of Rama, and he with a pure heart offers protection to every living being, while his subjects ever love and obey him. He has won the hearts of all beings by protecting the interests of the needy and the afflicted. Generosity, faithful service to his preceptor, valour in the field of battle, skill in archery, have all contributed to his renown. Truth, austerity, friendship, purity, simplicity of life, knowledge of philosophy and service of his teacher are well-known qualities of Shri Ramachandra.

"O Devi, Shri Ramachandra ever acting in the highest interests of all, equal to the maharishis and the gods in enlightenment, must not suffer the ills of exile. Shri Rama has never spoken a harsh word to any, how shall I then, at thy instigation, give him this pitiless message? What shall befall me bereft of Rama who is endowed with forgiveness, gratitude, self-control, renunciation, truth and virtue, and who never inflicts pain on any human being?

"O Kaikeyi, I have grown old and my end is near. In this wretched state I beseech thee to show mercy on me. The earth girdled by the sea, and all that is contained therein, shall be thine. Why dost thou drive me to the brink of death's dark abyss?

"O Kaikeyi, I touch thy feet in supplication. Protect Shri Ramachandra and save me from dishonouring my word."

King Dasaratha, stricken with grief, fell senseless, his whole frame convulsed and agitated. Again and again he entreated the queen to take him beyond the sea of suffering, but that cruel one growing each instant more adamant, replied: "O King, if thou repent of the two boons given to me, none in the world will call thee righteous. When other kings question thee regarding thy promises, O Righteous One, what will be

thine answer? Wilt thou say that she to whom thou owest thy life and by whose grace thou yet livest, who rendered thee great service at the time of misfortune and to whom thou didst promise two boons, has now been refused these blessings?

"Assuredly thou shalt become a stigma on the illustrious dynasty of Ikshwaku, having given promises from which thou now wouldst fain withdraw. Recollect King Shivya, who gave the flesh of his own body, to redeem a pledge, was of thy royal house. King Alarka, likewise of thy dynasty, plucked out his eyes that the sight of an aged and learned brahmin might be restored, and thus obtained the highest state. Not only man is bound by his word, the ocean whose boundaries are fixed, does not pass beyond the shore. Therefore, recollecting thy pledge, do not relinquish it. O King, art thou bereft of thy senses? Abandoning truth, thou wouldst grant Rama the kingdom so that thou mayest enjoy the embraces of Queen Kaushalya. Be it in accord with dharma or not, be it truth or falsehood, thou must fulfil the promise made to me, it shall never be revoked.

" Shouldst thou withdraw thy pledge and grant Ramachandra the kingdom, I will give up my life by drinking deadly poison. Were I to see Queen Kaushalya receiving salutations as chief queen, I should not be able to endure it.

" O Great Sovereign, I swear by Bharata and my own life that nothing save the exile of Rama shall satisfy me."

After speaking these words, Kaikeyi became silent, disregarding the supplications of the afflicted monarch. Understanding the full portent of the harsh words of Kaikeyi, implying Rama's exile and the rulership of Bharata, the king remained silent for a long time. His senses numbed, he gazed steadfastly at the face of his beloved queen, speaking thus bitterly.

Maharajah Dasaratha, afflicted on hearing the threatening speech of Kaikeyi resembling a thunderbolt, inspiring pain and grief, knowing she had resolved to banish Rama, cried out: " O Rama! Rama!" and heaving deep sighs fell to the earth like a felled tree. Like a madman bereft of sense or as one in delirium or a snake hypnotized by incantations, he fell, deprived of his glory. In abject tones, he addressed Kaikeyi, saying: " Who has instructed thee in this evil design, cloaked in specious

garb? Art thou not ashamed to address me as one possessed? Formerly, I did not deem thee capable of such conduct; in youth, thy disposition was otherwise. What has overpowered thee that thou seekest such a boon? Stay these unjust words that Rama should go to the forest and Bharata occupy the throne. O Sinful One, O Cruel-hearted One, O Evil Doer, relinquish the insistence on thy resolve, for thine own sake and for the sake of thy subjects and thy son. Either Rama or I must have offended thee. How have we done so, that thou speakest thus? Assuredly Prince Bharata will never wish to occupy the throne while Rama lives. I deem Bharata no less virtuous than Ramachandra. When instructing Rama to go to the forest, seeing him stricken, how can I look on him? How can I look upon his face darkened like the moon in eclipse? How can I revoke that decision made in consultation with my ministers and friends desiring my welfare, causing confusion, as the sudden smiting of an army by the enemy. What will the kings of other lands say when they hear the breaking of my resolve which was reached by common consent? Will they not say: 'King Dasaratha of the House of Ikshwaku is like a child. We marvel that he has ruled so long.' When the aged, wise and learned brahmins enquire for Rama, shall I answer them that, coerced by Kaikeyi, I have sent him into exile? If I say this in truth, it will be accounted falsehood since I have already instructed my Guru to install Shri Rama as regent. What will his mother, Queen Kaushalya, say, if I banish Rama? How shall I explain this cruel deed to Queen Kaushalya? She is ever dutiful, a friend, serving me as a handmaid, keeping my secrets as a trusted companion, practising virtue like a woman and in attending on my welfare resembling a sister, serving me with delicious food like a mother, ever speaking sweetly to me, ever desiring my good; her son is dearest to me. How can I fail to accord her due respect? Fearing thy displeasure, how great would be my subsequent repentance and remorse?

"As one partaking of delicious food, really injurious to him, is later filled with regret, so knowing Rama exiled at my command, the terrified Sumitra will place no further faith in me. Oh! how unfortunate is this, that Sita hearing these evil

tidings of my death and Shri Ramachandra's banishment, will yield up her life, as a nymph dies deprived of her mate in a Himalayan valley.

" I shall not long survive the exile of Rama and the grief of Sita. Enjoy thou the kingdom with thy son, but as a widow! Know well, O Devi, there is no happiness for me in life if Rama is exiled. As men infatuated by the colour of wine, drink it thinking ill of it the while and knowing its harmful consequences, so did I, charmed by thee, enter into union with thee, believing thee true and faithful. Yet now I know thy disposition to be incomparably vile. Thou hast deluded me with alluring deceits.

"As a hunter decoys a deer by sweet music, so alas! will the people of the capital think of me, as my son's executioner. They will shrink from me as from a brahmin who drinks intoxicating liquor. Alas! that I should hear such bitter words. Now I am suffering deep affliction as men who consume the fruit of their former iniquities. O Sinful One, having long protected thee, it is I who have erred, like the man who carefully preserves the rope with which he is eventually hanged.

"As a child, in a solitary place, plays with a black snake not knowing it will be the cause of his death, so am I. Who is more wicked than myself, who, during my lifetime causes my saintly son to become an orphan? The whole world will despise me saying: 'King Dasaratha is overcome by lust and at the prompting of a woman has sent his son into exile.'

" Shri Rama in his childhood abstained from flesh, honey[1] and wine, and faithful to his brahmacharya vow, was reduced to a skeleton by the observance of severe austerities, much study and the firm service of his preceptor. Now, a householder, the time has come that he should enjoy health and prosperity, yet now he is condemned to undergo great physical privation. It is certain when I command him to go to the forest, he will reply 'Be it so, O Sire'. Alas! how much better if it could be otherwise. My beloved child will assuredly not disobey me. Not knowing my true reason, and believing the command to spring from the sincerity of my heart, he will acquiesce and

[1] Honey in those days being obtained by killing all the bees, hence Shri Rama eschewed it.

willingly depart; yet all will execrate me if Rama leaves us.

"Death, who spares none, will take me to the region of Yama while Shri Ramachandra has gone to the forest, then O Kaikeyi, what grievous injustice wilt thou inflict on thy remaining relatives and Queen Kaushalya? She, deprived of Rama and Lakshmana, will no longer be able to endure her grief and will yield up her life.

"O Kaikeyi, having cast me, Kaushalya, Sumitra and my three sons into the pit of death, canst thou be happy? Wilt thou be able to protect the dynasty of Ikshwaku, which for long ages has been ruled without disturbance, when Rama and I are gone? Will Bharata approve the banishment of Rama, if it be so, let him not perform my obsequies. O Enemy, may thine ambitions be fulfilled. When I am dead and Rama banished, then wilt thou, a widow, govern the kingdom with thy son.

"O Thou dwelling in our midst as the pretended daughter of a king, wert thou truly a princess, thine incomparable renown would not have been tarnished, nor would I have been set at nought by thee.

"Now my son, accustomed to ride on chariots, horses and elephants will have to walk barefoot in the forest. He, who formerly was served at table by attendants in jewelled livery, each vying with the other, saying: 'My dish is sweeter, O Lord,' how shall that Rama henceforth live on the bitter and insipid fruits of the forest? How shall he pass his life dependent on fruit and roots? How shall Shri Ramachandra, accustomed to costly apparel and a luxurious couch, sleep on the bare ground, clothed in the yellow robe of a mendicant? I know not why an evil-minded woman should issue this cruel decree that Rama should be exiled and Bharata be installed as regent.

"Woe unto those women seeking material gain, skilful in accomplishing their own purpose! I do not condemn all women, but those like the mother of Bharata. O Kaikeyi, versed in wrong doing, ever meanly disposed and seeking thine own advantage, didst thou enter my house to cause me affliction? What fault hast thou seen in me or in Ramachandra, the friend of all the world? O Kaikeyi, on seeing Rama suffering in the

forest at thy request, fathers will abandon their sons, faithful wives their husbands, and the whole world will condemn thee.

" When I behold Shri Ramachandra adorned and handsome as a god, approaching me, my eyes are delighted ; seeing him thus, I am filled with joy and courage. The affairs of the world may continue in the absence of the dawn, and the earth exist without rain, evoked by Indra, but none in the capital will enjoy happiness beholding Rama going into exile.

"Alas ! To-day, I am about to perish for long nursing thee in my arms, O Kaikeyi, a venomous snake bent on my destruction. Thou art my real enemy. Now do thou, Rama and Lakshmana perform my funeral ceremonies, then govern the kingdom with thy son, Bharata. Destroy my relatives and friends, depopulate my towns and country, and live in accord with mine enemies, O Thou Cruel Wretch ! Why do thy teeth not break into a thousand fragments, seeing thou hast spoken improperly before thy lord, and uttered vain boasts. Never did my Rama speak an unkind word to thee. He knows not how to speak unkindly. Thou chargest Rama with baseness, who ever was of gentle speech and who is endowed with every excellent quality.

" O Thou Defamer of the Kingdom of Kaikeya, I shall not grant thy request whether thou be angered or sorrowful or takest thy life by swallowing poison or dasheth thy head against a rock, or even sinkest into the earth. Thou utterest words keen as the edge of a razor, deceitful and heartrending, veiling them in gentle accents, thy nature is perverse, thou art the destroyer of thine own family. Thou hast inflicted bitter agony on me. Though charming in looks, thou art a dangerous woman. I do not desire to consort with one so surpassingly wicked.

" What use to speak of love and joy, I cannot live without Ramachandra. O Devi, abstain from destroying me. I touch thy feet, be gracious to me."

Finding her heart unmoved by his appeal, King Dasaratha like an orphan, fawning and abject, fell unconscious at the feet of Kaikeyi as one about to die.

CHAPTER 13

Kaikeyi disregards the king's immeasurable distress

KING DASARATHA lying on the ground in utter ignominy, resembled King Yayati fallen from heaven. The cruel queen, seeing her purpose yet unaccomplished, herself fearless yet inspiring terror in the heart of the king, again demanded the boons, saying :—

" O King, thou didst ever deem thyself a man of truth and one faithful to his vows, why dost thou then withhold the boons promised to me ? "

After some time, the monarch exceedingly disquieted, replied in anger :—

" O Sinful Woman, after my death when Ramachandra, the chief of men, has gone into exile, thou mayest accomplish thy purpose. In heaven, the gods will enquire concerning the welfare of Shri Ramachandra. If I reply that I have sent Rama into exile to please Kaikeyi, it will be looked upon as a falsehood, and none will believe it. Having passed innumerable years without a son, how should I, after long suffering and anxiety, being blessed with an heir, forsake the long-armed Rama ?

" How can Rama, valorous, learned, tolerant and forbearing, whose eyes are like lotuses, be driven into exile by me ? How should I send the beautiful Rama, whose complexion is like the blue lotus, to the Dandaka forest ? Shri Rama, meriting every comfort and pleasure, undeserving of sorrow, how can I behold that wise Ramachandra in distress ?

" Had I died without seeing Rama afflicted, who merits no suffering whatsoever, my spirit would have experienced joy in heaven. O Pitiless, O Sinful Kaikeyi, why, why dost thou compel me to send my dear and truthful son, Shri Ramachandra, to the forest ? I shall incur dishonour throughout the whole world."

Thus lamenting and distracted, evening having fallen and the night creeping on apace, King Dasaratha afflicted and in great anguish, experienced no delight on beholding the moon.

The old king, sighing heavily, continued to lament, and gazing at the starry sky cried: " O Night, adorned with stars, do not pass into the dawn. O Auspicious Night, with great humility, I supplicate thee, have pity on me and do not pass away. I have no desire to behold the face of this cruel Kaikeyi, who has caused me immeasurable distress."

Then the monarch again entreated Kaikeyi saying: "A virtuous man and yet wretched, I take refuge in thee, for I have only a short while to live. O Auspicious One! Know this; I am a king and not alone but in the royal assembly have I proclaimed Rama as regent. Be gracious unto me, O Kaikeyi, O Child, O Giver of Delight! Grant imperishable rulership to Shri Ramachandra and endear thyself to me. O Kaikeyi, thus shalt thou obtain great renown.

" O Thou of beautiful face, let Rama be installed, so shalt thou cause pleasure to Shri Ramachandra, to Bharata, to the court, nay to the whole world."

Then the pure-hearted sovereign, his eyes reddened in his distress burst into a flood of tears, but the wicked Kaikeyi disregarded both his flattery and his weeping.

The king, realising the exile of Shri Rama could not be avoided, fell senseless to the earth. Sighing deeply at every moment, King Dasaratha passed the night in great anguish.

At dawn, the royal musicians striking up to awaken the great monarch, were ordered by him to be silent.

CHAPTER 14

The king is overcome by grief; the queen summons Shri Rama

KAIKEYI beholding the king distracted with suffering, undecided how to act, and restless as a fish on dry land, said :—

" O King, what is the meaning of thy grief and sorrow? Having promised me two boons, wilt thou incur the sin of default? Those versed in the secret of righteousness, call truth the essence of virtue. I ask thee but to protect truth for thine

own good. O King, in ancient times, thy forbear, King Shivya fulfilled a promise given, by yielding up his body to a hawk and thus acquired a high spiritual state. Thus also the illustrious Alarka gladly taking out his own eyes gave them to a blind brahmin versed in the Veda. The Lord of Waters, the ocean, paying due regard to truth, does not pass beyond its boundaries at the time of the full moon. Truth is Brahman. Truth is the crown of righteousness. The imperishable Veda proclaims the glory of truth. When the heart is purified by the practice of truth, Brahman is realised. O King, if thou holdest truth to be the fruit of virtue, then following truth grant me the two boons, O Bestower of Boons. For the sake of safeguarding thy future happiness, send Rama into exile ! Send Rama into exile at my request. Thrice I repeat my desire. If thou failest to exile Rama, I shall not survive the dishonour and shall yield up my life in thy presence."

Hearing the words of Kaikeyi, King Dasaratha found himself bound and unable to escape, like King Bali of old in the presence of Vamana.[1] Distraught, his mind agitated, his countenance pallid, the king resembled a bullock tottering between the yoke and the wheel. Anxiety and grief overwhelmed the king ; with a supreme effort, mustering his courage and controlling his senses, his eyes distended, he addressed Kaikeyi ; " O Sinful Woman, at the time of our nuptials, in the presence of the sacred flame, I took thy hand in mine, but to-day, I reject thee and the son born of thee, Prince Bharata. O Devi, the night is nearly passed and the sun about to rise. My Guru and the elders will urge me to perform the installation ceremony. Let the preparations made for the installation be used for my funeral rites. Let no part therein be taken by thee, O Kaikeyi, as thou dost oppose the installation of Shri Rama. How shall I look upon the faces of these people now filled with joy in anticipation of Rama's enthronement, that will soon become overcast and melancholy ? "

The night illumined by the moon and stars passed away as the King was speaking, and day dawned. Then Kaikeyi, eloquent in speech but full of iniquity, transported with anger, spoke passionately :—

[1] Vamana—The holy Dwarf, a divine Incarnation.

" O King, why dost thou speak like one affected by a grave disease? Send for thy son Ramachandra to come hither. Install my son on the throne and send Rama into exile. Then shalt thou have accomplished thy duty."

The king, like a well-bred horse smarting under the lash, replied: " I am caught in the net of dharma, I am bereft of understanding, let me behold my eldest son, Shri Rama."

The morning had now dawned, and the night had fled; the sun had risen and an auspicious planet was in the ascendant. The blessed Lord Vasishtha endowed with every excellent quality, surrounded by his disciples, holding the sacred articles required for the installation, came to the great door. Passing through the capital, Shri Vasishtha observed the streets swept and watered. Flags were fluttering everywhere in the breeze, flowers of many kinds were strewn on the roads and garlands hung here and there. All the inhabitants looked happy; shops and stalls displayed a variety of merchandise, while incense mixed with ambergris and sandalwood perfumed the air. Everywhere people were celebrating the festival and eagerly awaiting the coronation of Ramachandra.

Having passed through the city of Ayodhya, which resembled Amaravati, Shri Vasishtha came to the royal palace, and beheld at the gate an assembly of brahmins and teachers who enhanced the scene. Innumerable priests, skilled in the ritual of sacrifice, courtiers and leaders of the warrior class, as well as merchants were gathered there. Shri Vasishtha penetrated to the private apartments and delightedly entered there. At the door he beheld the charioteer Sumantra of pleasing looks and the holy sage begged him to announce his arrival to the king and inform his majesty that he had brought the sacred water of the Gunga in golden vessels, and various seeds, fragrant herbs and gems of different kinds. There was also honey, curds, clarified butter, parched rice, kusha grass, flowers and milk, together with eight beautiful virgins and a white elephant. A chariot drawn by four horses, an excellent sword and bow, a palanquin with bearers and a canopy resembling the moon in purity. Two white chamaras, a narrow-necked jar of gold, white heifers, a lion with great teeth, a fine steed, a lion throne, a tiger skin, sacrificial fuel and fire. Musicians of every kind, beautifully

adorned women singers, teachers, priests, cows, deer and birds; representatives of the people and merchants with their families were gathered there. These and many people inspired by affection and of gentle speech, had come with their leaders to see the coronation of Rama.

Shri Vasishtha ordered Sumantra to inform the king with all haste that Rama should be installed when the Pushya star was in the ascendant. Sumantra instructed by the royal Sage Vasishtha, and having access to the person of the king, entered the palace crying "Jai! Jai! to his majesty". The guards permitted him to enter without hindrance, and Sumantra, approaching the king, ignorant of his condition, began to praise his royal master, according to the prevailing custom. With great humility he addressed him, saying: "O Gracious Sovereign, as the sun at the breaking of day gives pleasure to the sea, so do thou give us joy by thy radiant countenance. Add to our delight, O Mighty Lord! As in the morning Indra was adored by his charioteer, whereafter he defeated the asuras, so do I salute thee. I come to wake thee as the Vidyas and Vedas waken Brahma. As sun and moon stimulate the earth which supports all men and life, so do I come to waken thee, O Great Ruler. Awake, O Maharaj and rejoice the hearts of the people by thy sight. Don thy royal robes and adorn thyself with the great gems, resplendent like the sun on the crest of Mount Meru. O Sire, may the Moon, the Sun, Shiva and Kuvera be auspicious to thee. May Varuna, Agni and Indra grant thee success. The lovely night has passed and the auspicious day has dawned. O Royal Sage, arise and perform thy duties; preparations for the installation of Rama are completed, the leading citizens and the inhabitants of the capital are waiting in reverence at the gate; the blessed Sage Vasishtha, with his disciples, is at the door. Command us, O King, to inaugurate the coronation of Rama immediately; as cattle without a keeper, an army without a general, night without the moon, cows without a bull, so is thy kingdom without a king to-day."

The king hearing the peaceful words of Sumantra was once more submerged in the sea of sorrow; though overcome with grief, his eyes red with wrath, he answered him:

" O Sumantra, thy words of praise inflict great pain on me."

Sumantra, beholding the miserable condition of his master, and hearing his anguished words, joining his palms in submission, stepped backwards, tongue-tied.

Then Kaikeyi, skilled in achieving her own purpose, addressed Sumantra: " O Sumantra, being overjoyed on account of the installation of his son, the king has not slept this night. Being fatigued, he is now overcome with sleep. Go thou, therefore, and bring the illustrious Ramachandra hither; this matter requires no deliberation."

Sumantra reflected that the arrival of Shri Ramachandra would pacify the mind of the king: he speedily went to summon him and on the way reflected, " Why has Queen Kaikeyi summoned Rama in haste?" The charioteer believed the eagerness of the king had prompted him to summon Shri Ramachandra for the purpose of his installation. Sumantra, happily came to the beautiful palace of Shri Rama which resembled a small island in the sea, and beheld there many people standing at the gate.

He beheld many kings and great chieftains assembled in their allotted places.

CHAPTER 15

Sumantra hurries to Prince Rama's palace

When night had given way to the dawn, brahmins well-versed in the Veda, together with the king's priests, came to the palace gate. With them came the counsellors, the chiefs of the army and leading merchants to witness the installation of Rama.

The sun having risen and the Pushya planet with Karrata[1] being auspicious,[2] it being the time at which Rama was born, brahmins brought vessels of gold filled with water, a finely

[1] Cancer.

[2] In the right conjunction astrologically.

decorated throne and a resplendent chariot with a seat spread with a tiger skin. Water was brought from the confluence of the Gunga and Yamuna and from the holy rivers, lakes and wells, from the westward flowing streams and those descending from great heights and flowing through the plains. From the seas also water was provided and stored in shining vessels of gold and silver, wherein lotus blooms floated and on whose surface sticks of Gular[1] and banyan were sprinkled.

Honey, curds, clarified butter, kusha grass, and flowers were also provided. Beautifully adorned singing women were likewise present. Chamaras with handles of gold set with jewels, a beautiful canopy, scintillating and round as the moon, were furnished for the ceremony, also a white caparisoned steed, a young elephant of great size, and eight virgins gracefully attired.

Musicians with vinas, bards and those who proclaim the king's praise; everything required for the installation of a sovereign of the dynasty of Ikshwaku was furnished by command of the king. Not beholding King Dasaratha at the appointed time, those present said: "Who will announce our arrival to the monarch? The sun has risen, but the king has not come forth; every preparation for the installation of Rama is now complete."

While they were thus speaking, Sumantra, honoured servant of the state, addressed the royal guests, and maharajahs, saying: "As commanded by the king, I purpose to bring Shri Rama before him. On my return, I will ask his majesty for you who are worthy of honour, the reason for the delay."

The aged Sumantra came to the door of the inner apartment and entered, unannounced. Praising the royal dynasty of Raghu, he reached the chamber where the king was lying on the ground. Pouring forth his praise, he approached the arras hanging before the king's chamber, and said: "O Sovereign, may Surya, Kuvera, Varuna, Agni and Indra grant thee victory. The Goddess Night, has departed, dawn has come, arise O Lion among Kings! Brahmins, ambassadors and chiefs of the forces have assembled and are desirous of seeing thee."

The king, rousing himself, said to his chief minister, Sumantra: "Bring Shri Ramachandra hither speedily. Why dost

[1] Gular—Twigs of a fragrant resinous tree.

thou delay? I do not sleep, go bring Shri Rama with all haste."

Sumantra, bowing to the king, went forth to execute his commands. Thinking the installation of Rama to be near, he set out for the palace, passing joyfully along the royal route gay with flags and banners. Hearing on all sides, people conversing of the coming event, he mingled with the happy throng and after walking some distance, saw Shri Rama's palace, white as the peak of Mount Kailasha and fair as Indra's abode.

The turrets, adorned with golden images, studded with coral and jewels, rendered the palace resplendent, like the winter clouds on the caverns of Mount Sumeru. The main gateway, decorated with wreaths of gems and pearls, was fragrant with sandalwood and ambergris, sweet-scented like the Malaygiri mountain and abounding with cranes and peacocks. The doors and walls of the inner apartments were decorated with paintings of lions, tigers and wolves, pleasing to the eye and mind.

The palace of Rama, resplendent as the sun and moon, furnished like the palace of Kuvera and equalling the abode of Indra, was surrounded by many kinds of birds who sported there. Men from distant lands in bejewelled apparel waited bearing gifts in their hands, eager to behold Rama. The spacious palace was sumptuously furnished and the attendants serving there were men of small stature.

Shri Sumantra, delighting the people, in his chariot drawn by horses, came to the door of the palace which was filled with untold wealth and surrounded by deer and peacocks gladdening the heart.

Entering the gates and greeting those dear to Rama, Sumantra reached the door of the inner apartment. There also he heard everyone conversing of Shri Rama and he rejoiced to hear them speaking of his glory. He beheld the inner inclosure, resplendent and lofty as Mount Meru, which was rendered charming by the presence of many deer and birds. There, too, he beheld those from various lands, descending from their chariots, bearing gifts.

He observed an elephant equal to a hill in height, resembling a dark cloud, who had never known the touch of a goad and

whose forehead was dripping with sweat. Its name was Shatrunja, and it stood prepared to carry Rama. •

Proceeding further, Sumantra beheld many charioteers and horsemen ready with their caparisoned horses. Continuing on his way, Shri Rama's chief minister saw countless artists and poets gathered there.

Passing through the multitude, he came to the private apartment of Shri Rama. Unchallenged, the great Sumantra, resembling a cloud, entered the apartment as a crocodile enters the gem-filled ocean.

CHAPTER 16

Shri Rama in his chariot drives swiftly to the king

PASSING through a further doorway, thronged with people, Sumantra came to another gate where no guard stood. He beheld there many young men, alert, vigilant, and devoted to their master, armed with bows and axes, and wearing beautiful ear-rings. Beyond these, Sumantra saw aged men, clad in red, gorgeously attired, holding staves in their hands, guarding the apartments of the Queens. Seeing the virtuous Sumantra approaching with others, they stood respectfully at attention.

Sumantra, addressing these humble and experienced attendants, said: "Be pleased to inform Shri Ramachandra that Sumantra waits at the door."

They, ever desiring the good of Rama, informed the prince and Sita of the arrival of Sumantra. Knowing Sumantra to be in the confidence of his royal father, Shri Rama affectionately caused him to be summoned.

The charioteer, entering there, perceived Shri Ramachandra resembling Kuvera himself, seated on a golden couch, spread with soft cushions and richly ornamented. His brow was anointed with pure and fragrant sandalwood-paste, the colour of the blood of a wild boar.

By his side the Princess Sita, as beautiful as the moon attended

by the Chitra[1] planet, was seated, holding a chamara in her hand.

Sumantra, versed in the customs of the court, offered respectful salutations to Shri Rama who appeared as resplendent as the noonday sun. With joined palms, Sumantra humbly enquired as to the prince's welfare and addressed him who was thus seated on the couch, saying: "O Excellent Son of Queen Kaushalya, the king desires to see thee in the apartment of Queen Kaikeyi, be pleased to go thither without delay."

Thus addressed, that Lion among men, the most illustrious Ramachandra, filled with joy, on receiving the summons, replied: "Be it so, I will go thither with all speed." Then turning to Sita, he said: "O Devi, my mother Kaikeyi, and my father have consulted each other concerning those matters relative to my installation. O Princess of Beautiful Eyes, my mother Kaikeyi, ever benevolent and accomplished, knowing the king's desire, is influencing him for my good! That daughter of the great King of Kaikeya, ever obedient to my royal father desires my welfare. He, with his beloved queen, has sent for me through Sumantra, who is ever well-disposed to me, and desires what is pleasing to me, as does the king, my sire, and the queen, my mother. Assuredly, to-day the king will proclaim me regent. I shall go to my royal father in all haste, do thou converse happily with thy maids of honour."

Hearing these courteous words, spoken by her lord, the lotus-eyed Princess Sita reciting the Peace Chant, followed Shri Ramachandra to the door. She said: "O Maharaj, the kingdom has many learned brahmins who will crown thee, as Indra was crowned by Brahma. When the preliminary initiation is completed and thou dost perform the Rajasuya[2] sacrifice and I behold thee dressed in an antelope skin with the deer's horns in thy hand, do thou then allow me to pay thee homage. May Indra in the east protect thee, may Yama in the south protect thee, may Varuna in the west protect thee, may Kuvera in the north protect thee."

Having taken leave of Sita, Shri Rama left his palace with Sumantra. Shri Rama, going forth from his palace, as a lion

[1] Chitra—Spica virginis.
[2] Rajasuya sacrifice—a great sacrifice performed at a king's installation.

issues from his cave, beheld Shri Lakshmana humbly waiting at the door.

At the middle gate, Shri Rama encountered his friends and honoured those who had gathered there to witness his coronation. Then that Lion among men, the son of King Dasaratha, mounted his chariot resplendent as flame, spread with tiger skins and which, on its course, made a noise like thunder. Inlaid with gold and gems, it dazzled the beholders as does the brightness of the sun. The horses yoked to the chariot, equalling young elephants, galloped as swiftly as the steeds of Indra.

Shri Rama, seated in his resplendent chariot moving rapidly with a sound as of thunder issuing from the clouds, appeared like the moon coursing in the heavens. His younger brother, Prince Lakshmana attended him standing behind him in the chariot, with a chamara in his hand.

On every side, shouts of "Jai! Jai!" arose, while the multitude followed Shri Rama's chariot with its cavalcade of mounted horsemen and mountain-like elephants. Warriors whose brows were anointed with sandalwood paste and ambergris, preceded the royal chariot bearing naked swords in their hands. Then followed the musicians and bards singing their praises and the shouts of warriors resembling the roaring of lions. The chariot went forward amid a rain of flowers showered down from the balconies and windows by beautifully adorned women, of faultless limbs, who thus offered salutations to Rama and desirous of his welfare chanted hymns of adoration, saying: "O Delight of Thy Mother, whose heart to-day is raised in exultation because of thee; to-day thy royal mother will see thee in possession of the throne.

"The Princess Sita, exceedingly dear to Rama is esteemed the most fortunate woman in the world by womankind who, believing her to have practised a high degree of virtue and ascetism in a previous birth, say, "As the planet Rohini[1] found union with the moon, so has the Princess Sita found union with Rama."

Hearing the delightful eulogies of the women, Raghava pressed on, listening to the converse of the citizens and those come from afar, concerning his approaching coronation. Some

[1] Rohini—fourth of the lunar asterisms.

said: "To-day, Shri Ramachandra, our lord, will acquire limitless wealth and power through the favour of his royal sire. Those people over whom he holds sway, will obtain their heart's desire and the fulfilment of their ambitions. Should he enjoy the kingdom for long, it will be our gain, since no distress will visit the kingdom while he is king."

Thus preceded by neighing horses and the praises of his dynasty sung by chroniclers and bards, Rama advanced like the god Kuvera, while on every side he beheld the decorated highways filled with male and female elephants, chariots, horses and people and stalls overflowing with gems and merchandise.

CHAPTER 17

He advances to the palace amidst the plaudits of his friends

SEATED in his chariot, the prince beheld his delighted friends and the city, white as a cloud, adorned with flags and banners fluttering here and there, fragrant with the perfume of incense, filled with a multitude of men and enriched by stately buildings. Passing through the scented highways where heaps of sandalwood were burning, and rare perfumes, wool and silken cloths, unpierced pearls, and innumerable gems being exposed to view, with stalls replete with articles of food and drink and merchandise of every kind, he beheld the royal highway adorned like the pathway of the gods in heaven, with every auspicious mark, such as curds, rice, sandalwood, parched grain and milk. Traversing the cross-roads gay with flowers and fragrant objects, amidst the blessings and salutations of his friends, he acknowledged their praise with humility. Those advanced in years, were crying: "O Prince, thou who art to be crowned to-day, let thy rule resemble thy grandfather's and thy great grandfather's, thus shall we prosper as in the days of thine ancestors, may our happiness exceed even those times. Neither do we require the comforts of this world, nor those of the other world. Beholding Shri Ramachandra returning after his coronation,

our delight will exceed all else. Nothing is dearer to us than the installation of Shri Ramachandra of limitless glory."

Thus did Raghava advance, amidst the eulogies of his friends the focus of every eye and heart, serene and imperturbable. Those who were unable to behold him or were unnoticed by him, became objects of contempt to others, nay, they were a reproach to themselves. The all-compassionate Ramachandra looked on each of the four castes with equal condescension. Each loved him according to his capacity.

Passing the temples, the sacred groves and pavilions, Shri Ramachandra circumambulated them in reverence. He now beheld the royal palace, resembling a white cloud, its towers like the snow-capped peaks of Mount Kailasa, its balconies seeming almost to reach the skies like the fire chariots of the gods; the pleasure houses set with precious gems, caused the whole palace to excel all those on earth and rival even the abode of Indra.

Approaching his father's palace, Shri Rama passed through the three gateways guarded by archers, and proceeded on foot through the fourth and fifth enclosures. There, leaving his attendants, he entered the private apartments of the king.

The multitude seeing Rama enter the palace were filled with joy and awaited his coming forth as the sea awaits the coming of the full moon.

CHAPTER 18

He sees the king full of anguish and speechless; Kaikeyi utters the cruel words

ENTERING the private apartment, Shri Ramachandra beheld King Dasaratha full of distress, his countenance pale, seated with Kaikeyi on the royal couch. First placing his head at the feet of his royal sire, he then respectfully offered salutations to Mother Kaikeyi.

The king, his eyes filled with tears, his throat choked with

emotion, could only utter the word " Rama " and nothing more. As the heart of a man who accidentally touches a serpent is filled with fear, so was the heart of Rama on beholding the king's misery. The king agitated by grief and remorse, sighing bitterly, filled with anguish, resembled the ocean which, calm by nature, is agitated by a mighty storm, or Rahu[1] causing the sun's eclipse, or the soul of a sage stirred by the utterance of falsehoods. Without knowing the cause of the king's distress, Shri Rama became agitated like the sea on the day of the full moon. Shri Ramachandra, ever engaged in seeking his father's welfare, reflected: " Why is my father not happy to see me to-day? Formerly, when displeased, on beholding me he was pacified, but to-day, beholding me, he is troubled. Why is he overcome with grief and bereft of his glory? "

Making obeisance to Kaikeyi, he said: " If by an involuntary offence, I have caused my father displeasure, then O Mother, propitiate him for me. Erstwhile, even when displeased, my father showed favour to me, but to-day, I behold him pale of countenance, and deeply distressed, nor does he speak to me. Is my revered father suffering any physical or mental distress? It is rare indeed for a man to be consistently happy. Has his majesty seen any grievous fault in the amiable Prince Bharata or the valorous Shatrughna, or in my mothers or in me? I do not desire to live a single instant if his majesty is not satisfied with me, or is displeased or if I have disobeyed him. Why should not man obey his parents, who are the source of his birth and who are living gods? Hast thou spoken harsh words, in vanity, to the king, on hearing which his heart is lacerated? O Devi, answer my question truly. Tell me the cause of this unprecedented grief in my sire."

Kaikeyi thus addressed by Shri Rama, dead to all shame and skilful in defence of her selfish purpose, spoke arrogantly: " O Rama, the king is not angry nor is he suffering physical pain, he has something on his mind which he fears to disclose to thee. He loves thee dearly and so hesitates to tell thee this unpleasant matter. It is for thee to fulfil what he has promised to me and to act in accordance with it. Having formerly granted

[1] Rahu—a mythical demon, said to cause the eclipse of the sun and moon by swallowing it.

me a boon, he now repents it like a common man. To promise a boon and then seek to evade it, is like the setting up of a dam when the water has gone. O Rama, have a care lest the king abandon truth for thy sake. Among holy men, truth is said to be the root of dharma. Should the king command thee and thou fulfil his command without further deliberation, then will I reveal the whole truth to thee. The king may not communicate with thee directly, therefore, be ready to execute what I command on his behalf."

Shri Rama, highly agitated, replied to Kaikeyi in the presence of the king: " For shame, O Devi, to speak thus to me. At the command of my father I am willing to do anything, even to casting myself into the fire. At the bidding of the king my parent and author of my welfare, I will gladly drink deadly poison or throw myself into the sea. O Devi, disclose to me his will, I vow to fulfil his command. Be assured, O Mother, Rama does not utter falsehood."

To the ever truthful Rama, Kaikeyi answered in these wounding words: " O Ramachandra, long ago the Maharajah fought against the asuras and fell wounded on the field. I then preserved him and he promised me two boons. For these I ask the installation of Prince Bharata and thy exile to the Dandaka forest. O Great One, if thou desirest that thou and thy father should uphold truth, then hear me. In obedience to thy father, now go into exile for fourteen years. Let the preparations made for thine installation be used for the enthronement of Bharata. Giving up thy claims to the kingdom, do thou with matted hair, wearing a deer skin, live in the Dandaka forest for seven and again seven years. Let the earth be ruled by Prince Bharata. This kingdom filled with an abundance of gems, horses and elephants must be his. On account of this is the king distressed, his countenance pale and he is unable to look on thee. O Rama, obey the king and preserve him by fulfilling his command."

At these cruel words of Kaikeyi, Shri Ramachandra betrayed no sign of distress, but the king realising the future suffering of his son was overwhelmed with grief.

CHAPTER 19

Shri Ramachandra betrays no sign of distress and prepares for exile

The slayer of his foes, Shri Ramachandra, hearing the words of Kaikeyi, keen as the pangs of death, was in no way moved by them, and answered: "Be it so! To honour the promise made by the king, I will leave for the forest immediately, with matted locks, attired in raiment made of bark, but I desire to know why the illustrious sovereign does not address me? O Devi, fear not, I vow, in thy presence that I shall dwell in the forest, dressed in bark with matted locks; rejoice, therefore! Whatever command the benevolent monarch, ever mindful of my welfare, shall lay upon me, I will gladly execute to please him. There is nothing I would not do for him without hesitation, but one painful thought still lingers in my mind. Why does the king not speak to me himself of Bharata's enthronement? O Mother, by thine order, I am willing to surrender to my brother Bharata, not only the kingdom, but also Sita, together with every object of desire, my wealth and my life. How much more would I do for my father, that he may preserve the vow of truth and serve thy purpose. Render this matter clear to the king. How is it that I behold my father with bowed head, shedding tears? Let messengers on swift horses summon Prince Bharata immediately from his uncle's house, while I, without considering the merit or demerit of my sire's injunctions, enter the Dandaka forest for fourteen years."

Queen Kaikeyi highly pleased by the words uttered by Shri Ramachandra and assured of his exile, urged him to depart, saying: "So be it; messengers on swift footed horses will summon Bharata immediately from his uncle's home. O Rama, being ready to enter the forest, do not delay: depart, therefore, with all speed. Overcome with shame, the king dare not ask thee to depart, but do thou disregard this. O Ramachandra, the king will neither bathe nor partake of food till thou hast entered upon thine exile."

The king, hearing the words of Kaikeyi, cried "Woe",

" Woe ", and, stricken with grief, fell senseless on the golden couch. Raising up the king, Shri Ramachandra, urged on by the words of Kaikeyi as a horse under the lash, prepared to enter the forest in all haste. His heart unmoved by the queen's cruel words, he replied: " O Devi, I did not desire the kingdom to acquire wealth and power, but becoming regent, I wished to preserve dharma. Know me, like the sages, to be a protector of dharma. If I can render any service to my father at the cost of my life, it is as if already accomplished. There is no greater good in this world than service to one's sire by thought, word and deed. On this command, not issued by the king but by thee, I will dwell for fourteen years in the uninhabited forest. O Sati, thou hast been my mother and yet art unacquainted with my nature. If thou had'st known me, no need would have arisen to consult my father on so insignificant a matter. Now I go to take leave of my mother, Queen Kaushalya, and offer consolation to my Sita. Let Bharata rule the kingdom according to dharma and serve our royal father faithfully. This is a son's abiding duty."

Hearing the words of Shri Ramachandra, the king, speechless and overcome with grief, wept aloud, shedding bitter tears. The most illustrious Rama made obeisance to his father lying pitifully there and, then bowing to the feet of Kaikeyi, left the apartment. Having circumambulated the King and Queen Kaikeyi with extreme reverence, Shri Ramachandra came forth from the inner chamber and beheld his friends standing at the door. Shri Lakshmana full of wrath, his eyes suffused with tears, followed Rama.

Shri Rama circumambulated the sacred articles prepared for the installation ceremony in great reverence, and prayed that they should be dedicated to the installation of Prince Bharata. Then turning from them, without a backward glance he slowly withdrew.

The abandoning of the ceremony failed to impair the serenity of Shri Ramachandra, the splendour of his countenance remained unchanged as the moon suffers no diminution of its beauty in the waning period. On renouncing the kingdom and departing for exile, Shri Ramachandra resembled a great yogi and none observed any change of mood in him.

Relinquishing the royal canopy, the beautiful chamara and bidding a respectful and affectionate farewell to his friends and the people's delegates and guests, remembering the sorrow occasioned to them, and restraining his senses, the prince went to the apartments of his mother, to break the distressing tidings to her. Those about him found no change in him, neither in the adornments of his body, donned in preparation for the royal ceremony, nor in the cheerfulness of his countenance. Such was the truthful Ramachandra. As the autumnal moon does not lose its splendour, so the cheerfulness of the mighty-armed Rama did not diminish. Addressing those standing near with sweetness and respect, he approached his mother Kaushalya.

The most valorous Prince Lakshmana, the sharer of his brother's joys and griefs, followed him. Aware of the great distress that would arise in the hearts of his friends, Shri Rama for his mother's sake entered the palace in a serene and cheerful mood.

CHAPTER 20

Queen Kaushalya is afflicted and helpless with sorrow

PERCEIVING that Lion among men, Shri Ramachandra, his palms joined in a gesture of farewell, coming forth from his father's apartments, the ladies of the inner chamber began to lament loudly, saying: " Shall Shri Rama, who fulfilled all our desires without awaiting the injunction of his royal sire and who is our sole refuge, to-day go into exile?

" From his birth he has honoured and respected us as his own mother, Queen Kaushalya. When we have spoken harsh words to him, he was never angry, nor did he ever give any cause for displeasure. That prince who ever reconciled those who were affronted, is to-day going into exile. Our king, acting like an ignorant man, is determined to destroy his subjects and is sending Rama, who is the sole support of all beings, into exile."

Thus, weeping bitterly, all the maids of honour and maid-

servants of the king lamented like cows bereft of their calves. The king hearing their cries of distress, deeply afflicted with grief for his son, overcome with shame, fell down on his couch. Shri Ramachandra, grieving for the woes of his relatives, breathing like a mighty elephant approached his mother's apartments with Lakshmana.

Entering there, he beheld at the first gate the venerable and aged guardian of the door and his attendants, who rose on perceiving the prince, crying " Jai " " Jai " to him. Reaching the second gate, he met with the aged brahmins honoured by the state for their great learning. Saluting them, he entered the third gate where women, the aged and children were keeping guard. The women gave their blessings to the prince and went to inform the Queen Kaushalya of Shri Rama's arrival.

According to scriptural injunctions, the queen had spent the whole night worshipping Shri Vishnu, desirous of her son's good. Clad in a silken sari, she was pouring oblations into the sacred fire, with joy. Shri Rama, entering the chamber of his mother, beheld her offering oblations into the sacred flame; he beheld there the sacrificial articles prepared for the worship of the gods; curds, rice, butter, sweetmeats, rice cooked in milk, garlands of white flowers, sesamum seed, fuel and jars filled with pure water.

Shri Rama saw the fair complexioned queen in a white robe, emaciated through long fasts. After a time, perceiving her son, Shri Ramachandra, she ran towards him as a mare runs to meet its foal. Embracing him, inspired by maternal love, she addressed the great Rama with gentle and affectionate words: " O my Son, mayest thou become aged and righteous like the royal sages. Mayest thou attain the age appropriate to thy dynasty. Mayest thou acquire renown and fulfil thy family duties. O Dear Prince, now approach thy truth-loving father, who awaits thee to-day to appoint thee regent of the kingdom."

Offering her son a seat, she placed before him sweetmeats; Shri Rama, touching them only, with joined palms humbly addressed her; he, ever affectionate and now showing even greater tenderness in protecting his mother's honour, said: " O Goddess, thou art not yet acquainted with the great calamity that threatens us. I must go to the Dandaka forest and have

come to seek thy sanction. It is the season of sorrow for thee, Sita and Lakshmana. Now, entering the forest, my seat will be of kusha grass and there, residing for fourteen years, I shall live on honey, roots and fruits. The king has conferred the regency on Prince Bharata and I, giving up royal fare, must enter the forest to eat the food of ascetics there. By the king's command, Bharata will be installed as regent. For fourteen years, it is ordained that I shall live in the forest, practising asceticism far from the haunts of men. The forest from henceforth will be my home; roots and berries will be my food!"

Hearing these words, the queen fell to the ground like the bough of a fir tree severed from the trunk, by an axe! Resembling a nymph fallen from heaven or a phantom tree struck down, she fell. Shri Ramachandra raised her to her couch, her body soiled with dust, like a steed that has rolled on the earth and gently brushed away the dust with his own hands. The queen, worthy of every happiness, seated by her son, filled with distress, addressed him in the presence of Shri Lakshmana:—

"O Child, O Rama, hadst thou not been born of my womb, I should have suffered the distress of being childless, but I should have been spared this sorrow. O My Son, were I a barren woman, I should not have been thus afflicted, for a barren woman has but one grief, that of being childless. The fortune that befalls a wife, alas! was not to be enjoyed by me for long! Having a son, I looked for happiness, but now, though chief queen, I must bear the piercing words of my rival consorts, no longer showing me deference. What greater calamity can befall a woman? The insults that will be heaped upon me, without thee, will prove unendurable. Alas! This is the season of unfathomable grief and affliction! O My Son, when thou art gone, I shall cease to live. As chief queen, I have already borne great provocation; now, serving Kaikeyi, I shall be deemed lower than her maidservant, indeed some say I am already her slave. Those who attend me, will desert me on beholding Bharata made regent."

Then Queen Kaushalya growing angry, began to utter bitter

words, saying: "How shall I, thus afflicted, look on the face of Kaikeyi? O Rama, seventeen years have passed since thou didst receive the holy thread.[1] Since then, I have lived in expectation of thine installation and the termination of my sorrows, but now I must suffer further. I shall not be able to endure this. O Rama, I shall not be able to suffer the contumely of the other queens in my old age. O Child, not beholding thy countenance resembling the full moon, how shall I bear this miserable life? I have kept innumerable fasts, worshipped the gods and nourished thee till now, yet unfortunate as I am, it has proved to be in vain. Surely my heart is made of stone that it has not broken to-day, it resembles a river in the rainy season that does not overflow under continued rain. Surely death has forgotten me or there is no room in his abode. Had it not been so, he would have carried me hence to-day like a doe carried away by a lion. Assuredly my heart must be as hard as iron that it is not riven under this affliction. O why does not the earth open and engulf me; it seems one cannot die before the time appointed. Those sacred austerities, fasts, meditation and penance undertaken for the prosperity of my child have proved vain, like seeds sown in a barren field. If at this time of sorrow, I might die, threatened with thy separation, I should embrace death as willingly as a cow deprived of its calf. O My Son, of what use is life now to me, robbed of the sight of thy face resembling the full moon? Nay, I will follow thee to the forest like a feeble cow following its calf."

Queen Kaushalya, the mother of Rama, afflicted and helpless, realising her own unfortunate position, and her son to be bound in the service of truth, lamented like a kinnari whose offspring has been made captive.

[1] A brahmin boy is invested with the holy thread at about eight years of age, the ceremony is called Upa-naya.
It is possible that Shri Rama received it earlier.

CHAPTER 21

Shri Rama, in spite of the laments of the queen and Shri Lakshmana, prepares for departure

SHRI LAKSHMANA, overcome with grief, addressed Mother Kaushalya in words suited to the occasion. He said: "O Mother, it cannot be pleasing to thee that Rama, at the command of the king, who is subject to a woman, and oblivious of the prosperity of the kingdom, should go to the forest. Old age has impaired the intellect of the monarch who, impelled by desire, is no longer master of his senses; what words will he not utter? I see no fault in Ramachandra for which he should be exiled and deprived of his kingdom. I know no man whether friend or foe who can find fault with Rama even in absence. Like a god, he is guileless, self-controlled and forbearing even to his foes; what righteous king would abandon such a son without cause? What son versed in the discharge of a sovereign's duties would give obedience to so puerile a king?"

Addressing Rama, Lakshmana continued: "O Brother, before the multitude become acquainted with these tidings, assume the reins of the kingdom, I will assist thee in the undertaking. O Raghava, who will dare oppose thee, when like death itself, I stand by thy side, armed with my bow? If two or three, nay if all the people of Ayodhya resist thee in thine undertaking, I will destroy them. If all the supporters of Bharata oppose thee, not even one shall escape. The meek are ever oppressed. Should our father, inspired by Kaikeyi, become our enemy, then, though worthy of protection, I will undoubtedly slay him! Even should a spiritual preceptor, prompted by egoity, follow the evil path and do what ought not to be done, he must be restrained.

"On what authority does the king confer the kingdom on the son of Kaikeyi, when the son of the chief queen, rightly heir to the throne, still lives? O Slayer of thy Foes, who will dare to incur our enmity and give Bharata the kingdom?

"O Mother, I swear by the truth, by my bow, by the laws of charity, by the merit acquired in worshipping the gods, that

I am Shri Rama's willing servant. O Devi, should Rama enter the blazing fire or the dark forest, know I shall have preceded him. O Goddess, do thou and Shri Ramachandra behold my prowess by which I shall destroy all your sufferings, as the sun destroys darkness. I will also slay the king enslaved by Kaikeyi, who is aged, contemptible, of unsubdued mind and in his second childhood."

Hearing the words of the noble Lakshmana, Queen Kaushalya was overcome with grief and said to Shri Ramachandra: "O Child, thou knowest the content of thy brother's heart, now act as thou considerest meet. It does not befit thee to abandon thy sorrow-stricken mother at the unjust words of her rival. O Righteous One, if thou art established in dharma, then remain here, serve me and acquire virtue. There is no higher duty than service of the mother. I am, with the king, equally an object of thy reverence, and I command thee not to go to the forest. In thy separation, there is no occasion for rejoicing, neither do I desire to live, but with thee I will gladly live, sustaining myself on herbs alone. If thou, leaving me afflicted with grief, go to the forest, then shall I refuse food and yield up my life. Then, O My Son, being responsible for my death thou wilt, like Samudra,[1] unmindful of thy mother, enter hell."

Seeing his mother, the Queen Kaushalya, thus lamenting, the righteous Ramachandra spoke to her dutifully, saying: "O Goddess, I cannot disregard my father's commands, therefore I bow before thee and entreat thy favour and sanction to enter the forest. Know that the Sage Kandu, a great pundit, acquainted with his yogic duty, slew a cow in obedience to his father's commands, knowing it to be a sin, which was thereafter not charged against him.

"In ancient times, likewise, in our own dynasty, the sons of King Sagara, digging the earth, sacrificed their lives at their father's behest. At the command of his father, the son of Jamadagnya, Parasurama, with his axe, cut off the head of his mother Renuka. O Devi, these and other godlike men have obeyed their father resolutely. I, too, without hesitation, shall perform that which benefits my father. O Mother, not I alone obey my father but all those virtuous men, mentioned by me,

[1] Samudra—the Lord of rivers who killed a brahmin.

have been obedient to their father's will. I follow no new law, nor one contrary to the traditions of the royal dynasty, but tread the path of my illustrious ancestors. I am accomplishing nought which has not already been accomplished in this world. He who acts in accordance with his father's commands does not fall from virtue."

Having spoken thus to his mother, Shri Rama addressed Lakshmana, saying: "O Lakshmana, I am acquainted with thine immeasurable love for me, thy valour and thy prowess; none can withstand thee. O Lakshmana, my mother endowed with every good quality is now subject to misery and grief through ignorance of dharma and lack of resignation. O Brother, dharma is the highest good on earth, Truth and dharma are one. My father's command is founded on dharma, hence it is superior to my mother's ruling. O Hero, it is unworthy in one seeking the supreme fruit of dharma, not to fulfil the promise made to his father, mother or a learned brahmin, I cannot, therefore, disregard my father's command. O Hero, inspired by my father, Mother Kaikeyi has urged me to this course, therefore, O Lakshmana, relinquish the idea of bloodshed and embracing the state of virtue, follow me."

Thus lovingly addressing Lakshmana, with bowed head and in great humility Rama turned to Queen Kaushalya and said: "O Goddess, now grant me permission to go into exile. In my absence pray for me. Having honoured my vow, I shall return, like King Yayati who falling to earth from heaven, again ascended thither. O Mother, comfort my unhappy father. Have no anxiety, O Mother, I shall return after fourteen years as desired by my father. Do thou, Sita, Lakshmana and Sumitra obey my royal sire. This is the ancient tradition. O Mother, disregarding the preparations made for mine installation, let thy mind be freed from grief and allow me to go into exile as ordained by dharma."

Hearing the words of Rama, inspired by righteous motives, spoken with courage and equanimity, Queen Kaushalya as one restored to life, gazed steadfastly at Rama and said: "O My Son, if thou art versed in dharma and art mindful of the good done to thee by thy parents, then am I as woıthy of thy respect as thy father. O My Son, do not abandon thine unfortunate

mother and enter the forest. O My Child, of what use is my life without thee? The earth, the region of the pittris, heaven and the region of Mahaloka, which are the abodes of highest bliss, for me are all void without thee. An hour with thee is my greatest delight O My Son."

Shri Rama, hearing his mother's lament, was agitated, like a king who is perturbed, when on a dark night his torch-bearers are assailed on the way.

Then the dutiful Rama again addressed his mother rendered almost senseless with grief and Lakshmana distressed and disquieted, and spoke to them for their good, in words that were full of integrity :—

"O Lakshmana, I know of thy prowess and the intensity of thy devotion to me, but now in opposition to my purpose, thou dost increase my mother's misery. O Brother, there are three means to happiness in this world, they are righteousness, prosperity and pleasure. Those who love righteousness should pursue it as a wife acquires merit by being obedient to her husband, and pleasure by endearing herself to him and prosperity by becoming a mother. That undertaking which does not ensure these three, should be given up and that by which they are secured should be carried out. He who pursues prosperity alone, is without friends and has many enemies, and he who is devoted to pleasure, which is not based on righteousness, is an object of contempt. O Brother, the king is firstly our preceptor, secondly our father and thirdly he is an aged man. From the point of view of dharma, I must obey his commands, whether they are inspired by anger or desire. As a righteous man, I must fulfil his behests. Rare is the son so ruthless as to disobey his father. How can I evade the behests of my sire, who is my parent and has full authority over me as a king, and further is the consort of my dear mother Kaushalya? How, therefore, should the queen, abandoning the virtuous king, her lord, follow me like a widowed woman? O Goddess, grant me permission to leave for the forest whilst thou dost recite the Peace Chant, that my vow may be accomplished.

"Like King Yayati of old who returned to heaven, inspired by his love of truth, I, too, shall return. O Mother, I dare not

disobey my father for the sake of a mere kingdom! Life is brief and I have no desire for the rulership of the world through the sacrifice of virtue."

The mighty Rama thus acquainting his mother with his intention of entering the forest as demanded by Kaikeyi, circumambulated the Queen Kaushalya, fixing his heart on his departure.

CHAPTER 22

He appeals to Shri Lakshmana not to grieve

SHRI RAMACHANDRA then turned to Shri Lakshmana, who unable to endure his distress, full of wrath against Kaikeyi, his eyes distorted, was breathing heavily like a mighty elephant. Addressing him in terms of affection as a beloved brother and friend, patiently calming his fears, Rama said: " O Brother, give up grief and anger and arm thyself with patience, forgetting the preparations made for mine installation, make thyself ready for my departure to the forest. O Lakshmana, prepare with the same zeal as thou didst prepare for my coronation. The mind of my mother, Kaikeyi, is clouded with suspicion on account of my proposed enthronement, therefore, O Lakshmana, act so that her suspicions may be allayed. O Brother, Mother Kaikeyi believes thou wilt use force to place me on the throne. This I cannot endure, nor can I suffer her to experience anxiety. At no time, do I recollect that I have voluntarily given cause for offence to my parents. O Lakshmana, let us relieve the apprehensions of our royal father, ever truthful and valiant but now fearful lest his future life be jeopardized. If I do not abandon the desire for the crown, the distress caused to the heart of the king, at the violation of his vow, will be mine also. O Lakshmana, because of this, I desire to enter the forest without delay, abandoning the project of mine installation. Thinking her purpose accomplished, Queen Kaikeyi will to-day, if I depart for the forest, cause her son Bharata to be summoned

and will make over the kingdom to him with joy. The heart of Kaikeyi will find no rest till I, dressed in a deer skin, with matted locks, enter the forest. I cannot grieve her, who has urged me to go to the forest and contributed to my resolution, therefore, I will depart without delay. O Lakshmana, the acquisition of the kingdom is not part of my destiny. If providence had favoured me, Kaikeyi would not have desired to send me to the forest. O Dear One, thou knowest no distinction was made by me between my three mothers, nor has Kaikeyi looked on me as different from Prince Bharata, but to-day to frustrate my coronation and send me into exile, she has uttered cruel and pitiless words. This is the will of God and nought else. Had it not been so, how should Kaikeyi the daughter of a king, of gentle disposition and noble nature, speak thus like a vulgar woman in the presence of her husband? Whatever is inscrutable to man should be known to be the decree of providence; even Brahma cannot evade the consequences of karma.[1] It is this unalterable and fixed decree that has created the dissension between Kaikeyi and me, not to be understood by man.

" Pleasure, pain, fear, anger, profit and loss, life and death, and similar matters come into being as a result of our karma. Even the sages practising great austerities, prompted by their karma, abandoning asceticism have been swept away by concupiscence and avarice. This sudden happening, never apprehended, this frustration of a well-devised plan is the work of karma. Therefore, I in no wise regret my resolve nor the cancellation of my coronation. Do thou also abandon grief and following me forget the preparations for the coronation. O Lakshmana, with these vessels of water brought hither for mine installation, let my dedication to the ascetic life, be made. Yet what use have I now for these sacred waters? From now on, I shall draw water with mine own hands for every ritual.

" O Lakshmana, do not grieve that the installation ceremony remains unperformed. We know by reason and discernment that there is little difference between ruling a kingdom and living in a forest. O Lakshmana, do not for an instant blame Queen

[1] Karma—The law governing the behaviour of matter in all its gross and subtle forms.

Kaikeyi for obstructing my coronation; prompted by karma, men say what is unlawful."

CHAPTER 23

Shri Lakshmana offers to defeat all those who obstruct Shri Rama's installation

INSTRUCTED by his brother, Lakshmana, his head bowed, was filled with distress on account of Shri Rama's impending departure, yet glad to learn the secret of dharma. Remaining in the cave of anger awhile, breathing like a snake provoked in its hole, his frowning mien resembling an enraged lion, swaying like the trunk of an elephant, with quivering limbs, averting his gaze, he addressed his elder brother, saying: "O Brother, in this evil hour, thou art subject to a great delusion. Ill-timed is this assertion that disobedience to a parent is contrary to dharma. It does not become one virtuous as thou art to speak thus. Thou, a leader among warriors, canst control thy fate, yet like a weak man thou speakest of it as irrevocable. Dost thou respect these wicked beings,[1] O Virtuous One? Dost thou not know how many deceivers appear as righteous men? Take note how the king and Kaikeyi for selfish ends deceive thee and send thee into exile. If this matter of the boons granted to Kaikeyi were true, then why was it not revealed 'ere the preparations for thy installation were made? If it can be said it was done in error, then that error is a calamity. It will cause dissension among the people. How can the younger take precedence over the elder in matters of state? I cannot suffer this, O Great Hero, pardon me. This law thou praiseth, by which thy mind is governed, is incomprehensible to me. Thou who art powerful, why must thou submit to Kaikeyi? Wilt thou obey the unjust command of thy father, contrary to the law of dharma? Dost thou not perceive their duplicity, in frustrating thine installation under the pretext of granting a boon?

[1] The King and Kaikeyi.

I consider the pursuit of such a course to be worthy of condemnation. This is the reason for my distress. Though our parents, the King and Kaikeyi, desire to harm thee and are swayed by passion, who, except thee, would countenance their design? Yet thou attributest this matter to the decree of fate. This action is unpleasing to me. Let the weak and the cowardly trust in so uncertain a fate, heroes and men of patient resolve, do not accept the dictates of karma. He, who by his own endeavours, conquers fate, never suffers. Let it be seen to-day whether fate or exertion prevail.

"That destiny[1] which prevents thine installation, which resembles an elephant refusing to respond to the goad, and having broken its fetters, is wandering about unchecked, that decree will I conquer by my prowess.

"Neither the guardians of the four quarters, nor all the dwellers in the Three Worlds, united as one, can prevent thine installation, how much less then, my father? Those who have planned thine exile, shall themselves pass fourteen years in exile. I will frustrate the hopes of my father and Kaikeyi, who, depriving thee of the kingdom, seek to enthrone Bharata. The power of karma will not bring such adversity to those opposed to us as my valour shall inflict on them! After ruling a thousand years, do thou retire to the forest, leaving thy sons to govern the kingdom, then, like our ancestors, who, becoming aged, withdrew to a hermitage, do thou continue to live in the forest. Formerly, kings in their declining years, giving over their subjects to the governance of their sons and grandsons, used to retire to the forest as ascetics. If, O Rama, thou fearest to rule against the behests of the king, thinking the administration would be insecure, I will protect thy kingdom as the shore protects the earth from the inroads of the sea. If I fail, may I never be called a hero! Now fix thy mind on thine enthronement with these auspicious preparations; singlehanded I can effect the defeat of the kings who obstruct thine installation. These two arms of mine are not for show, nor is my bow a mere decoration. My sword was never meant to dangle at my side, nor are my arrows designed to be kept in the quiver! All these are dedicated to the task of destroying the enemy. I will not

[1] The result of one's karma.

brook the existence of my foes. With my keen bright sword, I will hew their bodies to pieces, even if it be Indra himself. I will cut to pieces elephants, horses and men with my sword, creating large heaps and rendering advance impossible. To-day, my enemies shall fall like clouds rent by lightning. Donning the godha,[1] lifting up my bow, I shall strike the enemy with many shafts and large numbers of them with a single arrow. I shall destroy innumerable soldiers, horses and elephants by piercing their most vulnerable parts with my shafts. To-day I shall demonstrate the power of my weapons and establish thy sovereignty. To-day these two arms accustomed to be adorned with ornaments and sandalpaste and used to distributing charity and to protecting friends, shall prove their prowess by opposing those who obstruct thine installation. O Ramachandra, I am thy servant, tell me who is thy foe and command me to oppose him so that severing them from their fame and friends, the kingdom be placed in thy hands."

Shri Ramachandra, hearing the words of Lakshmana, wiping away his tears, consoled him, saying: "O Dear One, know my chief valour to be obedience to the will of my father; it behoves the virtuous to fulfil their father's command."

CHAPTER 24

The queen realises she has no power to restrain Shri Rama's resolution

SEEING the righteous Ramachandra determined to obey his sire, Queen Kaushalya, her eyes filled with tears and her throat choked with emotion, said :—

"O Rama, thou hast never experienced hardship. Fruit of my womb and the seed of King Dasaratha, thou, following dharma, hast ever spoken sweetly to all, how wilt thou be able

[1] A guard of leather and metal, worn on the left arm to protect it from the bow string.

to endure living in the forest? He whose servants live on sweetmeats and butter, how will that Rama of mine be able to live on roots and fruit? Who will not feel insecurity, knowing King Dasaratha to have banished his illustrious and virtuous son? If he acts thus to such a son, what of myself? If Ramachandra, beloved of all, is compelled to enter the forest, then undoubtedly destiny (past karma) rules our joys and sorrows. O Child, the fire of grief in my heart, fanned by the wind of thine absence, fed on lamentation and affliction; stimulated by tears, emitting the smoke of anxiety, will utterly consume and destroy me, like a forest fire at the end of winter reduces the bushes, creepers and grass to ashes. O Child, as a cow runs after its calf, so shall I follow thee wheresoever thou goest."

Rama, listening to the sorrowful speech of Queen Kaushalya, replied: " O Mother, the king is sorely distressed by the deceit of Kaikeyi, and I also must leave him when I go to the forest. The Maharajah will not survive if thou also come with me. No more cruel act can a woman perform than to leave her husband; it is not to be countenanced. As long as my father lives, it is for thee to serve him. This eternal dharma must be followed by thee."

The virtuous maharani listening to the advice of Shri Ramachandra, he who overcame difficulties with ease, replied submissively to him: " O My Son, thy words are true."

Shri Rama then addressed her who was suffering deep distress, saying: " O Goddess, both thou and I must obey my father. He is first my preceptor, secondly my father, thirdly thy husband and finally the protector, master and lord of us all. Having cheerfully passed fourteen years in the forest, I will return and do thy bidding."

Queen Kaushalya, her eyes brimming with tears, she who did not merit suffering, answered Shri Ramachandra, saying: " O My Son, how shall I endure dwelling with my rivals? If thou art resolved to enter the forest at the command of thy father, then like a wild doe take me with thee."

To his weeping mother, Shri Rama replied: "As long as a woman lives, she should consider her husband as her master and her lord. The king is our master, how should we be

masterless while the king lives? Bharata also is virtuous, humble and devoted to the good of all. He will undoubtedly treat thee with respect and not oppose thee. When I am gone, let not the king suffer on account of my separation, and let him not be overcome by this great grief. The king is now aged, it becomes thee to serve him with every care. Even a virtuous woman, devoted to piety and fasting, if negligent towards her consort, comes to a sinner's state, but she who is devoted to her lord attains heaven. The woman who is ever devoted to her husband and ever ready to seek his welfare, attains heaven, even if she has not worshipped any god. Service of the husband is a duty sanctioned by ancient tradition, by the Veda and by the scriptural law. O Mother, undertake those rituals promoting universal peace and serve the gods with floral offerings. For my sake, give hospitality to pious and learned brahmins and await my return. Performing the discipline of daily purification, give up savoury foods, and existing on simple fare, serve the king. Should the king still be living when I return, truly it shall be well."

The queen, her eyes suffused with tears, distressed on account of the impending separation from her son, replied to Shri Ramachandra: "O Child, thy resolution to enter the forest being fixed, I have no power to restrain thee. O Hero, fate is irrevocable, therefore, enter the forest without anxiety, mayest thou be happy. On thy return, my sufferings will cease. O Auspicious One, when thou returnest on the fulfilment of thy vow, rendering back the debt thou owest to thy father, my joy will be complete. None can comprehend the warp of fate.[1] It is fate that urges thee to oppose me. O Prince, now depart and return safely, promoting my delight with a pure heart. O Child, I pray that thou wilt return soon, and that I shall behold thee in robes of bark with matted locks."

Queen Kaushalya, knowing that Ramachandra was eager to enter the forest, reverently gave him her blessings, uttering auspicious words.

[1] The result of accumulated thought and action through countless lives.

CHAPTER 25

The queen gives her blessing and the brahmins pronounce the benediction

RESTRAINING her grief, sipping a few drops of pure water from her hand, Queen Kaushalya, purifying herself, performed the benedictory rites for the well-being of Rama. She said: "O Prince of the House of Raghu, I may not restrain thee, therefore now depart, and on thy return, tread the path of the virtuous. O Great Raghu, may that dharma which thou hast practised with courage, preserve thee. May the gods thou hast worshipped in the temples and on the highways and the great sages protect thee. May the weapons given thee by the wise Vishwamitra protect thee. O Mighty One, preserved by this service rendered by thee to thy father, mother and the truth, mayest thou live long. May the sacrificial kusha grass, sacred grass rings, altars, temples, sacred places, mountains, trees of every kind, lakes, rivers, birds, snakes and lions ever protect thee! May Brahma, Pusha,[1] Aryama,[2] Indra and Lokapala[3] all be auspicious to thee! May the seasons, the months, the weeks, the years, the day and night favour thee! O My Son, may holy meditation, concentration and dharma, together with the injunctions, ordained in the Veda protect thee! May the Lord Sanat-Kumara,[4] Mahadeva[5] with Uma,[6] Brihaspati, the seven holy Rishis[7] and Shri Narada bless thee! May all the perfect beings adored by me, ever protect thee! May the mountain ranges, the seas as also Varuna their lord, space, the earth, the rivers and the stars with their deities, the planets and the day and night protect thee in the forest! May the six seasons, the twelve months, the whole year and the divisions of the hour promote thy happiness! May the devas, the adhityas[8] and the asuras, wandering in the forest in the guise of hermits, protect thee!

[1] Pusha or Pushan—the Sun.
[2] Aryama—chief of the pittris or ancestors.
[3] Lokapala—guardian of the four quarters.
[4] Sanat-Kumara—mind-born son of Shri Brahma.
[5] Mahadeva—Great God, a title of Lord Shiva.
[6] Uma—Parvati, Shiva's consort.
[7] Seven Holy Rishis—Angira, Atri, Adhitya, Kratu, Poulastya, Vasishtha and Vasu.
[8] Adhityas—sun gods.

"May no rakshasas,[1] pisachas,[2] those who practise cruelty, that which is ill-omened and the eaters of flesh, ever cause thee injury! May no monkeys, scorpions, gadflies, serpents or reptiles approach thee! O My Son, may no elephant, lion, tiger, bear or beast with awful jaws, or buffaloes and those with dangerous horns, be hostile to thee; propitiated by me, may they not cause thee injury in the forest! May thy way be blessed, may thine undertaking be crowned with success! O My Son, mayest thou ever find fruits, roots and the means of subsistence! Mayest thou ever tread the forest unhindered! May all things between heaven and earth protect thee at all times! May Indra, the Moon, the Sun, Kuvera and Yama worshipped by thee, protect thee from thy foes! May Agni, Vayu, Dhuma,[3] and the sacred formulas, taught by the Rishis, protect thee when inadvertently contacting the untouchables! May the Lord of the world, Brahma, Vishnu and the gods not mentioned by me, protect thee in the forest!"

Then the illustrious Kaushalya worshipped the gods with flowers and sandalwood, offering oblations and kindling the sacred fire for the health and peace of Shri Ramachandra with the aid of the pious brahmins, learned in rituals. With butter, white flowers, sacrificial fuel and mustard seed prepared for the oblation by Queen Kaushalya, the learned and pious brahmins performed the Hawan[4] ceremony for the welfare of Rama.

Then the mother of Rama asked the brahmins to pronounce the benediction and present the oblations to the Lokopalas, the priests receiving the remainder. With honey, curds, rice and clarified butter, the brahmins pronounced their blessings and the queen having offered them abundant alms and whatsoever they desired, addressed Rama, saying: "O Rama, may the same blessing bestowed on Indra on the destruction of Bratrasura[5] be thine. May the blessing bestowed on Garuda[6] when conveying away the amrita,[7] be thine, by the power of my

[1] Rakshasas—demons.
[2] Pisachas—ghosts.
[3] Dhuma—god of smoke.
[4] Hawan—an ancient fire ceremony.
[5] Bratrasura or Vratrasura or Vritra—an asura killed by Indra.
[6] Garuda—king of birds, vehicle of Shri Vishnu.
[7] Amrita—the nectar of immortality.

worship of Vinata.[1] May the blessing attendant on Indra, the bearer of the mace, at the time of the raising of the amrita from the ocean at the instance of his mother, Aditi, be thine. O My Son, may the good fortune attendant on the blessed Trivikrama[2] when measuring the world in three strides, be thine also. O Rama, may the seasons, the ocean, the islands, the Vedas and the cardinal points contribute to thy happiness."

Thus, scattering rice over the head of her son, the large-eyed Queen Kaushalya, applying sandal paste to his forehead, bestowed on Rama the healing wood 'Vishalya Karina'. For his protection, the queen silently repeated the mantrams, and though her heart was filled with distress, appeared as one content. Embracing her son, and kissing his head, she said: "O My Son, now go in peace. Mayest thou, having fulfilled the commands of the king, return in health to Ayodhya. O Child, my joy will be complete, when I behold thee at thy coronation. My troubles ended and my ambitions fulfilled, on thy return from exile, beholding thee occupying the throne, I shall know supreme happiness. Having fulfilled the injunctions of thy father, thou wilt return, and I, beholding thee clad in royal apparel with innumerable gems, shall then find peace. O Prince, now depart and accomplish the desire of Princess Sita and me."

The queen reciting the Peace Chant, her eyes suffused with tears, embracing her son again and again, circumambulated him, gazing on his face.

Touching her feet repeatedly, the illustrious Ramachandra, resplendent in the light of the perfection of Self,[3] left for the palace of Princess Sita.

[1] Vinata—Garuda's mother.
[2] Trivikrama—Another name of Vamana, the holy Dwarf, fifth incarnation of Shri Vishnu.
[3] Self—the Divine in man.

CHAPTER 26

Shri Rama acquaints Princess Sita of his resolution

SHRI RAMACHANDRA, ever devoted to virtue, taking leave of his mother, ready to enter the forest, passed through the crowded streets, by his excellent qualities inspiring peace in the hearts of the multitude.

The ascetic Princess Sita, not being acquainted with what had happened, her mind full of joy in the thought of the coming coronation of her consort, worshipping the gods and proficient in every duty, awaited the approach of her lord with a happy heart.

Meantime, Rama dressed in his customary apparel, his head bowed in humility, entered the palace filled with joyful and richly attired persons.

Seeing Ramachandra unadorned, the princess was filled with consternation and fear, and rose trembling from her seat. Rama beholding the princess, dearer than life to him, could not restrain his distress. Sita, seeing the countenance of Rama, sad, pale and moist with anguish, addressed him: "O My Lord, what is this? To-day, the Pushya planet and the moon are in conjunction, and Brihaspati in the ascendant, this is the time fixed for thy coronation by the holy brahmins, why art thou thus distressed? Why do I not behold the canopy, pure as foam, set with a hundred stars over thy head? Why are the chamaras, white as the moon or the swan, not waving to and fro over thee? O Great One, why do I not hear the bards to-day eloquently voicing thy praise, or the pundits reciting the Chant of Peace?

"Why have the learned brahmins not anointed thee with honey, and curds as a mark of thine enthronement? Why art thou not attended by ministers, citizens and courtiers sumptuously attired? Why do four swift steeds with golden trappings, fleet of foot, not precede thee? I do not behold the great elephant resembling a cloud, possessed of every auspicious mark, in thy train? Why dost thou appear downcast when the preparations for thy coronation are completed? O My Lord, why does thy countenance manifest no signs of joy?"

Hearing the sorrowful words of the Princess Sita, Rama

replied: "O Sita, my honoured father has commanded me to go into exile. O Princess, born of an illustrious family, acquainted with the law of dharma and eminent in virtue, hear, while I tell thee what has befallen me. Long ago my father, a lover of truth, granted two boons to my mother Kaikeyi. Beholding the preparations for my coronation, Kaikeyi demanded the fulfilment of her boons and has now gained ascendency over his mind. In accordance with the two boons granted to her, it is mine to pass fourteen years in the Dandaka forest and Prince Bharata to be installed as regent. I am now going into exile and have come to bid thee farewell. Let no words in praise of me be repeated to Prince Bharata, lest he withhold his protection from thee. It is for thee to submit to his will for the sake of thy support. The king has conferred the regency on Prince Bharata forever. It behoves thee to act in such a way that he be not displeased with thee. O Wise One, now I go to the forest in obedience to my father's behest, remain here with a quiet heart. O Sinless One, when dressed as a hermit I leave for the forest, then do thou also cease to adorn thyself. Rising early, do thou worship the gods according to the prescribed rituals, then, approaching my father and mother, offer obeisance to them. My mother, Queen Kaushalya, having grown old, is afflicted on account of my departure, it becomes thee to serve her with respect. My other mothers should be honoured and served by thee like Queen Kaushalya, their hearts are also full of love towards me. Like my own mother Kaushalya, they have also cherished me, therefore I deem them worthy of the same honour. My brothers Bharata and Shatrughna should be regarded by thee as thy brothers or thy sons. It behoves thee never to provoke Prince Bharata, from now ruler of the kingdom and chief of the family. Served with sincerity, a king is pleased, but if provoked, he becomes full of wrath. A monarch renounces his own offspring if they oppose him and receives even strangers, as friends, who have promoted his welfare. O Kalyani, obeying King Bharata, remain here, seeking his good. O Dear One, I shall enter the great forest, it behoves thee to remain here; I charge thee to act in such a manner that no one will be displeased."

CHAPTER 27

She entreats Rama to allow her to accompany him

THE sweet-speaking Sita, worthy of Rama's love, thus being instructed to remain in Ayodhya, though filled with affection, indignantly replied: "O Offspring of a great king, O Rama, how canst thou speak in such wise? O Prince, thy words evoke laughter. O Chief of Men, father, mother, son and daughter-in-law live according to their merit and dependent on it, but a wife enjoys the fortune of her husband since she is a part of himself. I am therefore entitled to share thy father's command and also go into exile.

"The happiness of a woman depends on her husband, neither father, mother, son, relative or companion avail her at death; in this world and in the other world, the husband alone is her all-in-all. If thou to-day depart for the forest, I will precede thee on foot, clearing the thorns and kusha grass from thy path. O Hero, relinquishing anger and pride, take me with thee without hesitation. There is no fault in me that merits my remaining here, without thee. The joy experienced by lords of men whether dwelling in a palace or transported in an aerial chariot through the heavens or possessing the eightfold psychic powers, is far inferior to the joy of the wife in the service of her lord. My royal father has instructed me fully in the duties of a wife and, therefore, I have no need of further instruction in the matter. Assuredly I shall accompany thee to the forest, uninhabited by men, filled with savage beasts, such as bears and bulls. O My Hero, I will dwell in the forest as happily as in the palace of my father, having no anxiety in the three worlds save the service of my spouse. O Hero, I will wander with thee in the forest according to the ancient spiritual ordinance, free from desire for pleasure, traversing the honey-scented woodland. O Lord of my Life, since thou canst protect and support innumerable people, canst thou not more easily protect me? Without doubt to-day I shall enter the forest with thee, O Fortunate Prince, none can break my resolve. I shall live happily on fruits and roots with thee in the forest,

causing thee no anxiety. Under the protection of one as wise as thee, O Lord, I desire to enjoy the beauty of lakes, mountains and rivers without hindrance. O Rama, I long with thee to see the beautiful lakes where swans and kavandava birds[1] play and charming lotuses bloom. There will I bathe with thee, O My Lotus-eyed Lord, sporting there with thee. Thus would I pass a thousand years with thee, the happiness enjoyed in thy company renders even the delights of heaven distasteful to me. O Prince, without thee, heaven itself would not please me. I long to enter the forest with thee where deer, monkeys and elephants roam. O Prince, serving thy holy feet, I will pass the time there as happily as in my royal father's house. Recognizing no other, in thee my mind finds its highest delight; separated from thee, I shall surely die. O Master, be gracious enough to take me with thee, assuredly I shall not burden thee."

Shri Ramachandra hearing the humble and piteous words of Shri Sita, unwilling to let the princess accompany him, sought to dissuade her by describing the hardships of a forest life.

CHAPTER 28

Shri Rama seeks to dissuade her

THE virtuous Ramachandra, devoted to truth reflecting on the hardships to be borne in the forest, in spite of Sita's entreaty was unwilling to grant her request.

Once more, he addressed the weeping Sita, insisting she should not accompany him, saying: "O Sita, thou art nobly born and devoted to the practice of virtue; remain here continuing to act righteously. O Frail Princess, act according to my will. Life in the forest is fraught with misery, O Sita, relinquish the thought of sharing my exile, many are the dangers there. The forest is named 'Antara', meaning it is unfit for human habitation. For thine own well-being, I advise thee to remain here; in the forest there is no comfort. The rivers

[1] Kavandava bird—a species of duck.

issuing from the mountains are difficult to cross, the lions roaring in the mountain caves strike terror in the heart and render the forest perilous; therefore, remain here. O Sita, many wild beasts wandering at will in the forest may assail thee, therefore life there is full of danger. The deep marshes and the rivers infested with crocodiles are difficult to cross, even an elephant may find them impassable. Many savage elephants wander here and there; assuredly the forest is replete with perils. Waterless are the paths covered with thorns and poisonous creepers, there the hoarse cry of wild fowl re-echoes; the forest is a source of suffering. Wearied by journeying the traveller finds no silken pillows nor a soft couch, but at night must sleep on the bare earth, his bed the fallen leaves; verily the forest is a source of suffering! O Sita, in the forest, there is nought to eat save the fruit that has fallen from the trees; with this the traveller must be satisfied day and night, therefore the forest is a source of suffering! O Daughter of Mithila, fasting to the utmost extent, with matted locks, wearing robes of bark, one must constantly worship the devas and pittris and offer respectful hospitality to the unexpected guest. Thrice daily must ablutions be performed by those who live according to the prescribed ordinance, therefore, the forest is a source of suffering. O Youthful Princess, it is necessary to make offerings of flowers on the altars, plucked by one's own hand, as ordained by the sages. A dweller in the forest must be satisfied with whatever food he can obtain, therefore the forest is a source of suffering. Great storms visit the forest, covering it with darkness by day; constant hunger and many other perils prevail there, therefore is it a source of suffering. O Beautiful One, great snakes and pythons dwell in the forest, serpents as tortuous as the currents of the river live in the waters and obstruct the traveller's path, therefore the forest is a source of suffering. O Delicate Princess, scorpions, poisonous reptiles, hornets and mosquitoes afflict one constantly in the forest; therefore the forest is a source of suffering. O Charming Princess, the forest is filled with briars, harsh grass and gnarled trees obstructing the way, it is therefore a source of suffering. Life in the forest is full of conditions adverse to the body and manifold dangers, it is therefore a source of suffering. O Sita,

a dweller in the forest must relinquish anger and avarice and practise severe penances, nor must fear visit him in the midst of alarms.

"Do not, therefore, consider entering the forest which is not meant to be thy lot. Reflecting carefully, I see nought but suffering in the forest for thee."

Thus Rama disclosed his mind to Sita and sought to dissuade her from entering the forest, but the princess, sorely distressed, unable to consent to his counsel, then made answer.

CHAPTER 29

Sita continues her entreaties but the prince is unwilling to consent to her departure

SHRI SITA hearing Rama's words, was greatly distressed and with tears coursing down her cheeks, answered in a low voice :—

"O Rama, the sufferings of a life in the forest described by thee, will, through my love for thee be transmuted to joys. Deer, bear, lions, elephants, sarabhas,[1] birds, bulls and other woodland beasts, on beholding thy matchless countenance, will flee away stricken with terror. All fear thee, O Lord! Instructed by my elders to remain in thy company, it behoves me to go with thee; separated from thee, I cannot live. When near to thee, O Rama, even Indra the King of the Devas dare not do me injury. O Rama, thou hast taught me that a woman must not be parted from her lord. O Most Wise Lord, long ago, in my father's house, I was told by one conversant with the movements of the planets that I should have to dwell in the forest. O Mighty One, since I was told by that brahmin skilled in occult sciences, of my life in the forest with thee, I have looked forward to the time with joy. O, what felicity to live with thee in the forest! O Dear One, thou must grant me permission to go to the forest with thee. I must go with thee, it cannot be otherwise, thus shall I prove my

[1] Sarabha—a legendary animal with eight legs.

fidelity, enjoined by my elders. The time for the fulfilment of the brahmin's prophecy is at hand. O Hero, I know all the miseries of life in the forest, but it is those of unsubdued mind who suffer them. While still living in my father's house, a pious and saintly woman predicted in the presence of my mother, that I should live in the forest. O My Lord, formerly I have begged thee to let me sport with thee in the woods. The time is now come, grant my prayer and let me go with thee! O Prince, may the undertaking be propitious. Glad am I to accompany thee to the forest, to serve thee there will be my great delight. O Lord, relinquishing envy, accompanying thee in the forest, all my sins will be washed away through my devotion to thee. I have no other god but thee, if death overtakes me I shall not experience happiness in the other world without thee. I have heard from the brahmins that a woman given by her father according to the sacred ordinance to a man, becomes his wife in this world and also in the other world. O Prince of Beautiful Locks, in perfect devotion to thee, filled with humility, regarding pain and pleasure as equal, sharing thy austerities, permit me to accompany thee. If thou art still unwilling to take me, a woman distressed, to the forest, then I will seek death by poison or drowning."

In this wise, Sita entreated Rama to let her accompany him, but still the great prince was unwilling to consent. Seeing Rama disinclined to grant her request, Sita was filled with grief, and her hot tears fell, moistening the earth. Shri Rama, seeing the princess flushed with anxiety and indignation still sought to divert her from her purpose.

CHAPTER 30

Seeing her fixed resolve Shri Rama grants her request

SHRI RAMA again stressed the dangers of the forest and sought to persuade Sita not to accompany him; but Sita, with fixed resolve, trembling with fear yet urged by love and pride, spoke as in jest: "O Rama, if my father the Lord of Mithila, had

known thee as a man in form only, but a woman at heart, he would never have united me to thee. Alas! that men in ignorance speak of Rama as resembling the sun in splendour, when in reality he is not so. O Rama, what makes thee sad? Whence thy fear that thou, abandoning me who am devoted to thee, shouldst go to the forest? O Hero, know me to be to thee what Savitri[1] was to Satyavanta, the son of the valiant King Dyumatsena.[2] O Sinless Prince, I have never looked on any, even in thought, but thee, nor do I resemble those women dishonouring their family's name who look on other men; therefore, let me go with thee.

"O Rama, why dost thou desire to surrender me to Bharata, I, who, long resident with thee, thy youthful spouse, am solely devoted to thee? Whether living as an ascetic or hermit or residing in heaven, I will follow thee. Journeying in the forest will not weary me; by following thee, I shall experience the same delight as walking in the gardens or sporting with thee in the woods. O Rama, in thy company the thorny briars such as kusha, sarpat and shara will seem to me as soft as deer skin. The dust raised by the storm, covering my body, will be as sandalpaste to me. I shall share with thee the couch of grass with the same delight as a bed of silken down. What ever leaves, roots or fruits thou dost bring for me will be as sweet and satisfying as ambrosia. Enjoying with thee, the fruits and flowers of every season, I shall not call to mind my mother, father and home. No anxiety will be caused to thee by my presence in the forest, neither shall my sustenance be a burden to thee. I tell thee the forest will be heaven in thy company, and without thee even the palace will be hell to me. Be pleased, therefore, to let me go to the forest with thee. I fear nought in the forest, but if thou still refuseth to take me with thee, then will I end my life by poison; never will I dwell among strangers. O My Lord, without thee nothing is left to me but death; abandoned by thee, it were better to die. I cannot endure the grief of thy separation even for an hour, how then shall I suffer it for fourteen years?"

[1] Savitri—daughter of King Aswapati, who rescued her husband Satyavanta from the God of Death and restored him to life. The full story is found in the Mahabharata Vana Purana.

[2] Dyumatsena—Prince of S'alva.

Thus Sita, lamenting and embracing Shri Rama, wept aloud. From her eyes, like a she elephant wounded by poisoned arrows, long-restrained tears issued, as fire is kindled by the friction of wood. Crystal drops fell from her eyes as water slips from the petals of the lotus flowers. The face of the princess resembling the full moon, withered by the fire of intense grief, looked like a lotus withdrawn from water.

Shri Ramachandra, taking Sita, afflicted and fainting, in his arms, spoke to her in the following wise: "O Devi, I do not desire even to enter heaven if it causes thee pain! Nought do I fear! Like Brahma, I am wholly fearless! Though able to protect thee in every way, yet not fully knowing thy mind, I declined to let thee share my exile. Seeing thou art destined to share my exile, I do not desire to abandon thee, as a man of virtuous conduct determines not to sacrifice his good name. O Beautiful One, following the example of the good of yore, I shall act in the same manner; do thou follow me as Suvarchala[1] follows the sun. O Daughter of King Janaka, I am not entering the forest by my own desire, but to obey the injunctions of my father. O Devi, it is the duty of a son to obey his parents, I could not endure life if I failed to observe my father's command. Fate is invisible, who can control it, but the parents and the spiritual preceptor are visible deities and their orders must be obeyed. What in the world is so sacred as the worship of that which grants dharma, prosperity and pleasure? By this worship, homage is paid to the three worlds. O Sita, observance of truth, charity and sacrifice accompanied by suitable offerings (dakshina) is of less avail in obtaining the spiritual realm than the service of parents and the Guru. Those who serve their parents and the spiritual preceptor obtain heaven, wealth, learning and progeny and nothing is impossible for them. Those who are devoted to their parents and their Guru obtain entrance to heaven and the regions of the devas, the gandharvas and Brahma. This is eternal righteousness—to obey the command of thy parents, fixed in the practice of truth. O Sita, not knowing thy mind, I advised thee not to accompany me, but now seeing thy fixed resolve I desire to take thee with me. O Princess, whose eyes sparkle like wine, thou art destined

[1] Suvarchala—consort of the Sun.

to be my companion, do thou assist me in the performance of my duty. It is well that thou didst desire to be with me in accordance with the custom of our forbears. O Sita, prepare to go into exile without delay; without thee, even heaven does not please me. *Bestow thy jewels on the brahmins in charity* and offer food to the poor; hasten, make no delay. Give to the brahmins, jewels, ornaments, rich apparel, whatever thou possessest or is employed for my entertainment, all that is mine and thine, couches, coverlets, and vehicles give in charity to the brahmins and what remains distribute among the servants."

Shri Sita, happy at the acquiescence of Prince Rama and knowing her departure to be fixed, began to distribute all her possessions. Free from anxiety, Sita bestowed on the pious brahmins her wealth and all her jewels.

CHAPTER 31

Shri Lakshmana is resolved to accompany them

SHRI LAKSHMANA being present, hearing the converse of Rama and Sita, was afflicted and unable to restrain his grief, and weeping bitterly, spoke as follows: " If thou art resolved to enter the forest in which dwell many wild beasts and elephants, I will accompany thee with my bow and arrows. I will wander with thee in the beautiful forest to the delightful sounds of birds and deer abounding there. O Ramachandra, without thee I do not care to dwell even in the region of the gods nor do I desire immortality or dominion over other abodes."

Seeing Prince Lakshmana determined to accompany him to the forest, Shri Ramachandra sought to dissuade him, but Shri Lakshmana answered: " O Brother, having already granted me permission to accompany thee, why dost thou now prohibit me? O Sinless One, I would fain know what prevents thee from taking me with thee; my mind is clouded with fears."

Shri Ramachandra perceiving Lakshmana humbly standing before him ready to accompany him, said: " O Lakshmana, thou art most dear to me, virtuous, brave and constantly engaged

in righteous deeds, thou art as dear to me as my life. Thou art my younger brother, my servant and my friend. If I grant thy request, who will protect the renowned Kaushalya and Sumitra in thine absence? O Brother, the king who granted *their desires, as a cloud responds to the need of the earth,* is still under the bondage of pleasure desire. When Kaikeyi, the daughter of King Ashvapatti, becomes the queen mother, she will not treat her rival consorts well. She will not heed the needs and comforts of Queen Kaushalya and Sumitra, nor will Bharata, governed by his mother, respect them. Therefore, O Lakshmana, remaining here, winning the king's favour, render Queen Kaushalya happy. O Brother, heed my instruction. O Knower of Dharma, acting thus, thou wilt demonstrate thy great devotion to me and also serve thy mother and thereby earn great merit. O Lakshmana, reflecting on these words, follow my injunction. Bereft of us, our mothers cannot be happy."

Rama having uttered these words, the eloquent Lakshmana replied in gentle accents: "O Hero, Bharata will assuredly have due regard for the Queens Kaushalya and Sumitra. If Bharata, having obtained this mighty kingdom, through evil counsel and pride should not protect the queens, I will assuredly slay that wicked wretch. O Noble One, Mother Kaushalya can well command thousands like me. That illustrious queen can easily protect my mother and herself and countless others. Make me thy humble attendant, there is no wrong in this. Thus shall my highest desire be accomplished and thou shalt also find satisfaction. Armed with my bow and arrows, a spade and basket, gathering wild fruit and flowers, I shall precede thee, pointing out the way. Each day, I shall provide thee with ascetic's food, leaves and other suitable offerings. Do thou, with the daughter of the King of Videha, enjoy thyself on the mountain slopes. Sleeping or waking, I shall do all for thee."

Shri Ramachandra listened to the loving words of Shri Lakshmana with delight and answered: "O Lakshmana, seek the permission of thy mother Sumitra, and other relatives to go with me. O Lakshmana, fetch, without delay, the dread bows given by Varuna himself to Rajarishi Janaka at the time of the great sacrifice, also the impenetrable armour and the celestial

quivers, the two swords bright as the sun, decorated with gold, which King Janaka presented to me at the time of my nuptials and which were deposited with care in the house of Shri asisht' a."

Knowing his exile to be certain, Shri Lakshmana bade farewell to his relatives and, bringing the weapons decorated with fresh flowers from the home of Shri Vasishtha, presented them to Ram .

Th a Shri Ramachandra spoke joyfully to Lakshmana and said: "O Handsome Prince, thou art welcome at this hour, O Br ther, I desire to offer all my substance in charity to the brahm ins and ascetics, do thou assist me. To those brahmins dwelli g in the city devoted to their Guru, to them and to my servants distribute all my wealth. Summon the excellent Suyajna, the son of Shri Vasishtha, and bid him come here without delay. Having duly honoured him and other pious brahmins, I shall set out for the forest."

CHAPTER 32

Shri Rama bestows his wealth upon the brahmins, his friends and servants

COMMANDED by Shri Rama, Lakshmana went to the house of the Rishi Suyajna. Beholding the rishi seated in his sacrificial pavilion, he made obeisance to him and said: "Renouncing the kingdom, Shri Ramachandra is entering the forest, come in all haste to see him embark on this arduous undertaking."

Having performed his evening devotion, the Rishi Suyajna, in company with Prince Lakshmana, entered the beautiful and enchanting palace of Shri Rama. Perceiving this knower of the Veda tc have come, Shri Rama and Sita rose and with joined palms welcomed the rishi with reverence. Offering him salutations, Shri Rama bestowed on him alms, beautiful ornaments, jewelled earrings, necklaces of precious gem strung on

golden thread, amulets and other jewels, and at Sita's instance, said: "O Peaceful Rishi, be gracious enough to accept this necklace and gold which Shri Sita offers to thy spouse, also the bracelets and rings of beaten gold and jewelled bangles; about to enter the forest, Shri Sita offers them to thy wife. Accept also this soft pure couch with a coverlet embroidered with precious stones, pearls and tassels. This elephant also, named Shatranjaya, which my uncle gave me, I present to thee, O Great Rishi, together with a thousand golden coins."

Suyajna, requested by Shri Rama, accepted all the gifts, and gave his blessings to Rama, Lakshmana and Sita. Then Rama, ever of sweet speech, addressed Lakshmana as Brahma addresses Indra, saying: "O Lakshmana, call hither the two excellent sons of the Rishi Agastya and Shri Vishwamitra, and honour them with gifts of gems. Give to each in abundance as a field of corn is visited by rain, a thousand cows, gold, silver, jewels and ornaments. To that brahmin, versed in the Taittirya[1] who daily, with devotion, gives his blessing to Queen Kaushalya and Sumitra, who is learned in the Vedanta and experienced in all matters, give vehicles, silken robes and women attendants, so that he may be wholly satisfied. To my confidential adviser, Chitaratha, who has served me over a long period, give precious jewels, cloths and abundant wealth, and to the brahmacharis, my fellow students who study the Veda and are of excellent conduct, following no profession, living detached, enjoying good food, yet dependent on alms, give to each of these a thousand cows. O Lakshmana, bestow on them eighty camels apiece loaded with jewels, a thousand bullocks loaded with rice and two hundred bulls for tilling the ground. O Lakshmana, give them cows so that they may enjoy butter, milk and curds, and to each of the brahmacharis attending on Queen Kaushalya give a thousand cows and a thousand golden coins and give them abundant alms so that my mother may be pleased with us."

Obeying the commands of Prince Rama, Shri Lakshmana offered hospitality to the brahmins. Like Kuvera, he gave to every brahmin abundant wealth as instructed by his brother. Then Shri Rama, seeing his servants standing near him weeping,

[1] Taittirya Sanhita—A collection of teachings from the Black Yajurveda, instructions on the performance of sacrifice.

bestowed on them sufficient wealth for their entire lives and said: "Until I return from the forest, keep watch on the palace belonging to Shri Lakshmana and myself."

Then all wept overcome at the thought of his departure, and Rama turning to his treasurer said: "Bring hither my wealth," and they heaped quantities of gold and silver before him, wonderful to behold. Then Rama with the aid of Lakshmana distributed it among the aged, the sick and the needy.

Now, there was a certain brahmin of the family of Garga, whose name was Trijata, whose complexion was pale on account of much privation. He, toiling honestly, went to the forest daily with spade, axe and plough, maintaining his family on the fruits and flowers of the forest. His wife, worn down with much poverty, gathering her young children together, addressed her husband, saying: "Abandoning thy plough and spade, follow my instructions. Go with all speed and approach the virtuous Shri Ramachandra, undoubtedly thou shalt obtain something there."

The brahmin, covering himself with a few wretched rags, set out for Shri Rama's palace, his countenance, in lustre,[1] resembling that of the Rishi Bhrigu or Angiras.

Entering the fifth gate unchallenged, he came to where the multitude were assembled and approaching Shri Ramachandra, said: "O Illustrious Prince, I am destitute of wealth and having many children, subsist on what I find in the forest, look upon me with compassion."

Shri Rama answered jestingly: "I have still many thousand cows not yet bestowed on any. Casting thy staff from this spot, I will bestow on thee as many cows as can stand in the space between thee and where the staff has fallen."

Trijata, hearing these words, binding his rags firmly about his waist, twirling his staff, threw it away with all his might. The staff fell on the further bank of the river Sarayu where thousands of royal cows and bulls were grazing. Shri Rama ordered all these to be driven to the brahmin's hermitage and thus addressed him: "Be not displeased, O Brahmin, that I jested with thee; I desired to test thy great powers. Now, the

[1] It is here implied that the exalted state of the brahmin expressed itself in the form of spiritual radiance.

cattle will be driven to thine abode, ask further whatsoever thou desirest. O Brahmin, I will bestow anything thou asketh on thee; all my wealth is to be given to the brahmins. Nothing so pleases me as the bestowal of my wealth on brahmins such as thou, bringing me renown."

Then the brahmin Trijata highly gratified, taking the cows, departed with his wife, full of power, renown and devotion, blessing Shri Ramachandra.

Thereafter, Rama bestowed the remainder of his wealth, acquired through virtue, upon his friends, honouring them with marks of respect. There was not a brahmin, servant, pauper or beggar that he did not honour with charity at that time.

CHAPTER 33

He goes, with Sita and Lakshmana, to King Dasaratha's palace

SHRI RAMA, having with Sita, distributed riches in abundance to the brahmins in charity, went with Lakshmana and Sita to see King Dasaratha, followed by their servants bearing weapons adorned with flowers and sandalwood.

The people of the capital mounting to the top of high buildings and the roofs of seven-storied houses to view them, were dispirited. Some said: "Behold now Shri Rama, formerly attended by four divisions of the army, is to-day only followed by Sita and Lakshmana." Others answered, "Shri Rama, having tasted the delights of sovereignty and experienced in all the joys of life, he who confers wealth on the needy, prompted by duty, desires to render fruitful the promise of his sire. To-day, Sita never beheld before even by the birds, is exposed to the view of the common people on the highway."

One said: "Surely, the king is possessed of an evil spirit or he would never send so dear a son into exile." And another, "None ever banished even a traitor, how much less Shri Rama who has won the affection of the whole world by his excellent conduct? He is not only virtuous but is innocent,

compassionate, learned, truthful, self-controlled and of subdued mind. His subjects are as distressed at the thought of his absence as the water-fowl during the summer drought. The sufferings of Rama, Lord of the world, afflict all, as does a tree uprooted from the earth. The glorious Ramachandra, knower of dharma, resembles the root of a tree of which the flowers, fruit, leaves and branches are the people. Let us, abandoning our gardens, fields and homes, sharing his woes, follow Shri Rama. Our houses deserted, their treasure removed, their courtyards neglected, without grain or stores, their beauty gone, will be buried in dust. The devas will no longer visit them, but mice scurrying hither and thither will fill them with countless holes. Without water, covered with soot, uncleansed, no daily rites will be performed there. Fallen in ruins, strewn with broken vessels, as if cursed by the king or by divine decree, all these, utterly forsaken by us, let Kaikeyi enjoy.

"We pray that this city abandoned by Shri Rama may be converted into a wilderness and the forest where Rama dwells become a flourishing city. May the snakes forsake their holes, the deer and birds abandon their abode in the mountains and valleys, and the lion and elephant leave the forest, in fear of us and come and dwell in the capital of Ayodhya. May the city abandoned by us, bereft of hay and grain having become the resort of serpents, deer and birds, be ruled by Kaikeyi and her son and may we, dwelling in the forest with Rama, enjoy fully every happiness."

Shri Rama passing by, hearing their converse, was not in any way disturbed, but proceeding slowly, like a young elephant, with majestic stride approached the palace of his father which resembled the Meru mountain. Shri Rama entering the royal palace guarded by seasoned troops, beheld Sumantra standing there disconsolate. Shri Rama, with a smiling countenance, passing the people who were afflicted and filled with grief, approached his father's apartment, desirous of serving him.

Before entering the royal chamber, he requested Sumantra, dejected on account of Rama's departure, to inform the king of his arrival. Desirous of fulfilling the command of the virtuous monarch, Shri Rama, determined to enter the forest, requested Sumantra to make known his presence to the king.

CHAPTER 34

The king gives his blessing while the whole palace is filled with lamentation

The dark-complexioned, lotus-eyed Ramachandra, that peerless prince, instructed his minister to announce his arrival to the king. On this, Sumantra entering the royal apartment, beheld the king sorely distressed, lamenting bitterly, like the sun under eclipse or a fire buried in ashes or a lake without water.

The learned Sumantra with joined palms, addressed the sorely grieving monarch by praising him in a fitting manner and offering obeisance, he said: "Jai to thee, O King." Then, falteringly, in low and gentle accents he added: "O King, thy son Rama, that Lion among men, is at thy door, having distributed his whole wealth to the pious brahmins and servants; now having taken leave of his friends, he wishes to approach thee. Clothed with every excellent quality as the sun with its rays, he is about to depart for the forest, be pleased to receive him, O Sire."

The virtuous monarch, the knower of dharma, profound as the sea, pure as the sky, spoke: "O Sumantra, summon the ladies of the court, I wish to see Rama in their presence."

Entering the private apartments of the queens, Sumantra said: "His majesty demands your presence, go to him without delay." Thus addressed by Sumantra, in obedience to the wishes of their consort, they prepared to approach the king. Three hundred and fifty women, their eyes reddened with weeping on account of Rama's departure, surrounding Queen Kaushalya, slowly advanced towards the king. They being present, the king commanded Sumantra to bring his son before him.

Sumantra bringing Shri Rama, Lakshmana and Sita with him, speedily entered the apartment of the king. The monarch beholding Shri Rama approaching, rose from his seat, and ran towards him in haste, with his consorts, but ere he reached him fell senseless to the earth.

Then Shri Rama and Lakshmana advancing, lifted up the king who had been rendered unconscious by grief and suffering. The palace resounded with the lamentations of a thousand women crying, "Rama, Rama", "Alas! Alas!" the tinkling of their ornaments, drowned in the tumult of their cries.

Shri Rama and Lakshmana supporting the king in their arms, conveyed him to the couch, and after a long time, he revived. Then Shri Ramachandra addressed the monarch who was sinking in the ocean of grief, and said: "O Great King, Master of All, I am about to enter the Dandaka forest, be gracious enough to look on me with favour. Grant also that Lakshmana and Sita accompany me, since they, setting aside my counsel that they should remain here, have with fixed purpose, resolved to follow me. O Sire, giving up grief, command us, as Prajapati commands his subjects."

His eyes filled with compassion, fixing his gaze on his beloved son, the king, knowing him to be about to enter the forest with a serene heart, said: "O Ramachandra, I have been deceived by Queen Kaikeyi by reason of a promise, do thou, setting me aside, seize the kingdom of Ayodhya by force."

Hearing the king's words, Rama, eminent in virtue, spoke eloquently and humbly: "My Lord, may God grant thee yet a thousand years to live and rule the earth! Desirous of following truth, I shall assuredly enter the forest, dwelling there fourteen years. I shall then return to serve thee and offer thee homage."

Held fast in the toils of truth, the king, urged on by Kaikeyi, wept and full of distress, answered: "O Child, to attain felicity in the other world and renown on earth and for the sake of thy return, enter the forest with a peaceful heart. May no fear from any source visit thee on the way. O Ramachandra, firm in truth and in the performance of duty, none can divert thee from the path of righteousness. O My Son, do not yet depart, stay one more night with thy mother and me. Satisfied after the night, early in the morning, do thou set out for the forest. My Child, for my sake, thou hast undertaken that which none can accomplish. For my good and my future happiness, thou hast chosen to enter the forest. O Child, in truth, I cannot suffer thy departure but am helpless. Deceived by Kaikeyi,

whose designs resemble a fire covered with ashes, I am caught in this snare, but why must thou also suffer? O Child, what wonder that thou, my eldest son, should desire thy father to uphold the truth."

Hearing the words of his afflicted parent, Shri Rama, deeply distressed, answered: "O Father, if to-day I should remain happily in the royal palace, what of to-morrow? Therefore, with thy permission, I would fain leave at once. Let thy kingdom, filled with wealth and grain, inhabited by thy subjects, surrounded by tributary states, be given to Prince Bharata! O Giver of Boons, my resolution to enter the forest is fixed. Thus hast thou ordained! I shall reside in the forest for fourteen years with the ascetics. Do thou, without delay, give the kingdom to Bharata! I desire nought, nor is happiness as dear to me as obedience to thy commands. O My Father, do not grieve, nor be distressed; the mighty ocean, Lord of the Rivers, does not overstep its bounds. O Sire, I desire neither kingdom nor pleasure, nor even Janaki,[1] nor delight, nor heaven, nor life itself, but only wish to see thee the votary of truth. O My Father, thou art as a god to me, I vow by the truth and the merits acquired by me that my words are free from the taint of hypocrisy. O My Father and Lord, I cannot remain here a moment longer; restrain thy grief, nothing can move me from my resolve. When Kaikeyi commanded me to enter the forest, I answered "I will go", therefore, true to my word, I shall depart. Do not be distressed, O My Lord, I shall live in the forest where peaceful deer abound and birds sing their beautiful lays. O Father, a father is said to be the god of gods; knowing thee to be a supreme deity, I am obedient to thy behests. O August King, I shall easily pass fourteen years in the forest and then return to thee. Now it becomes thee to pacify those afflicted and sorrowful. O Lion among men, fulfil thy duty and do not fall a victim to grief. I renounce the capital the kingdom and the earth; let them be given to Bharata. Without hesitation I shall follow thy command and enter the forest. Let this kingdom adorned by high mountains and deep forests, filled with cities and villages, be ruled by Prince Bharata according to dharma. Let thy word be fulfilled.

[1] Janaki—a name of Sita.

O King, my heart is not given to delights nor to any object of pleasure, all I desire is to carry out thy commands, approved by virtuous men. O King, give up all sorrow for my sake; I neither desire happiness nor wealth, nor the earth, nor Janaki, nay not even life. I desire the world to know thee as the votary of truth. O My Lord, be happy. I, entering the forest filled with many kinds of trees, viewing the mountains and rivers, shall dwell joyfully, living on fruits and roots."

The king filled with anguish, embraced his son and fell senseless to the earth. The queens all began to lament, save Kaikeyi alone. Then the aged Sumantra also fell unconscious and the whole palace was filled with lamentation.

CHAPTER 35

Sumantra arraigns Queen Kaikeyi

COMING to his senses, the minister Sumantra, overcome with anger, breathing heavily, grinding his teeth, wringing his hands, beating his head, his eyes growing red, his colour altered, showed every sign of distress. Perceiving the Queen Kaikeyi to have forfeited the king's regard, Sumantra pierced her heart with words as keen as arrows, causing her to tremble. Penetrating to the most vulnerable parts of her being, Sumantra exposed the hidden defects of the queen by his barbed words. He said: "O Lady, thou hast abandoned thy husband the nourisher and supporter of the movable and immovable. There is nought undesirable in the world that thou hast not accomplished. I consider thee the murderess of thy husband and the destroyer of thy family. By thy vile deeds, thou hast smitten King Dasaratha, who is unconquerable, who resembles Indra and who is immovable as a mountain. O Kaikeyi, do not insult the aged king who has conferred these boons upon thee. Obedience to her husband should, in a woman, far exceed the love of a thousand sons. It is the ancient tradition of this dynasty, that the eldest son succeed his father, but thou seekest

to revoke it and make thy son ruler while the aged king still lives. Let thy son Bharata rule the kingdom, we will follow Rama wheresoever he goes. No one of good report will remain to help thy son in the administration, since thou seekest to repudiate the immemorial usage. I wonder the earth does not open and swallow thee for thy misdeeds. Why do the holy sages not condemn thee utterly? What fool cuts at the root of a sweet mango tree with his axe in order to plant a nimba[1] tree in its place, which does not bear sweet fruit even if watered with milk. It is a common saying that honey does not flow from the nimba tree. I perceive thee to be as wicked as thy mother. The sins committed by thy mother are known to me, I have heard of them on trustworthy report. Thy father, by virtue of a boon granted to him by a Yogi, understood the language of all creatures; of every bird, he understood the voice. Once, returning to the capital, he heard the converse between two ants and laughed, whereupon thy mother grew wrath and threatened to take her life, saying: 'I must know the cause of thy laughter.' The king replied, saying: 'O Lady, if I tell thee the cause of my laughter, it will undoubtedly lead to my death.' Then thy mother spoke to her husband, Kaikeya saying: 'I care not if thou livest or diest, tell me the cause of thy laughter. If thou wert dead, thou couldst not insult me with thy laughter'."

The king approaching the Yogi, told him the whole story, and the Yogi said: "O King, let thy wife return to the house of her father or die, do not thou reveal the secret to her." Then King Kaikeya with a contented mind abandoned thy mother, and lived free like Kuvera. O Sinful Queen, thou also followeth the evil path, deceiving the king and urging him to evil ways. It is a true saying 'The son follows the father and the daughter the mother'. Do not follow thy mother, but obey thy husband, the king, our protector, by regarding his word. Cease to be ruled by evil and do not lead thy husband into the way of unrighteousness. The king will not rescind the promise made to thee. O Lady, entreat the king to bestow the crown on Rama who is the eldest son, who is generous, virtuous, a fulfiller of his duty, and a protector of all living beings. If Shri Rama goes

[1] Nimba Tree or Nima Tree, a tree with exceedingly bitter leaves.

to the forest, the whole world will speak ill of thee. Let thy mind be at peace and let Rama be crowned. If any other than Rama rule the kingdom, it will not profit thee. If Rama becomes regent, then the king following the ancient tradition will doubtless retire to the forest."

Thus did Sumantra with harsh words arraign the queen in the assembly, but Kaikeyi was in no wise moved, neither did she show any sign of repentance, nor did her countenance change.

CHAPTER 36

She disregards the words of the chief minister and the king

THEN King Dasaratha, deeply distressed on account of his vow, addressed the weeping Sumantra, saying: "O Sumantra, prepare four divisions of the army laden with wealth to accompany Shri Rama. Let beautiful and eloquent women and merchants follow in his train, together with rich traders who can set up stores stocked with those things necessary for the army of Shri Rama. Let those personal attendants pleasing to Rama, having received abundant wealth, accompany him. Let chosen citizens accompany Rama with instruments of war and vehicles, and those who know the forest paths, go also. Shri Rama hunting the deer and elephants, drinking fresh honey and enjoying the beauty of the rivers will call those left behind to remembrance. Let all my wealth and grain be sent with Rama to the uninhabited forest. Observing sacrifices with the sages in sacred places, bestowing alms upon them, Shri Rama will dwell there happily. Prince Bharata will govern the people here and Rama set out abundantly provided."

Kaikeyi was seized with fear on hearing the words of the king, her mouth dried up and she was unable to speak. Trembling with agitation, she then said: "O Chief of men, Bharata will not accept the kingdom stripped of its wealth and people, resembling unfermented wine."

The eyes of the king reddened with anger at the cruel and

shameless words of Kaikeyi, and he replied: "O Wicked Wretch, why dost thou seek to crush me with this load of sorrow? When thou didst demand Rama's exile, thou didst not add he should go empty handed?"

At the king's words, the fury of Kaikeyi was redoubled, and she said: "Of thy dynasty, King Sagara sent his son Asumanjas into exile. Let Rama depart in the same manner."

At these words, King Dasaratha cried, "Woe, alas!" and all the people felt ashamed, but Kaikeyi remained unmoved. Then the chief minister, Siddhartha by name, a virtuous man, much favoured by King Dasaratha, addressed Kaikeyi, saying: "O Lady, Asumanjas, seizing the children playing in the street, threw them into the river Sarayu, for this he was considered an exceedingly wicked man. The people of the city, disgusted with his cruel deeds, entreated King Sagara to banish him, saying: 'Wilt thou preserve us or Prince Asumanjas in the city?' King Sagara enquired of them the cause of their fear and they said in reply: 'Prince Ansumanjas has become insane, catching our children while at play and throwing them into the river; he rejoices in this act.' King Sagara, therefore, abandoned his malevolent son and placing him on a carriage with his wife, clothing and other necessities, proclaimed: 'Asumanjas is banished for life.' Asumanjas, armed with an axe and basket, wandered about in the forest and reaped the fruit of his evil deeds. The righteous Maharajah Sagara banished his son on account of his evil conduct but, O Queen, what wrong has Rama done that he should be exiled by thee? I see no fault in Rama. It were as easy to find a taint in the moon! O Lady, if thou hast found any fault with Rama, then declare it openly and he will be banished from the kingdom. O Kaikeyi, it is an unrighteous act to abandon one following the path of virtue, without substantial reason; such an act would destroy the splendour of Indra himself. O Lady of Beautiful Countenance, do not destroy the prosperity of Shri Ramachandra and become a source of ignominy to the people." Hearing the words of the minister Siddhartha, King Dasaratha, overcome with grief, spoke to Kaikeyi, in broken accents and said: "O Sinful One, dost thou disregard the words of my

minister? Art thou blind to thine own welfare and mine? Art thou determined to follow the evil path? Giving up my wealth and substance and the comforts of the palace, I will follow Rama. Do thou rule at ease with Bharata for ever."

CHAPTER 37

Despite the instruction of Vasishtha, Shri Sita still desires to enter the forest

HEARING the words of the chief minister Siddhartha and those of the king, the gentle prince humbly made the following reply: "O King, having renounced all pleasures to live on the products of the forest, what need have I for wealth, an army or other requisites? Who will concern himself with the ropes binding the howdah to the elephant when he has parted with the elephant? O Great One, such am I, what occasion have I for an army in the forest? Let it be given to Prince Bharata. Bring me garments of bark. I go to pass fourteen years in the forest, and need but a spade to dig for roots and fruit and a creel and basket. I wish to start without further delay."

Hearing his words, Kaikeyi rose up and brought the robes of bark, and in the midst of the assembly without shame, addressed Prince Rama saying: "Put them on."

Shri Ramachandra receiving the raiment from Kaikeyi, discarding his rich apparel, put on the dress of bark. Shri Lakshmana also putting off his beautiful robes, put on the dress of an ascetic in the presence of his father. Shri Sita dressed in a lovely silken sari, seeing the robes of bark proffered her, was startled, like a doe at the sight of the fowler's snare.

The Princess Janaki, endowed with excellent qualities, received the bark dress, in shame and distress. Versed in the duties of a faithful spouse, she, addressing her god-like husband, her eyes suffused with tears, said: "How do the ascetics put on the robes of bark?"

Shri Sita, ignorant of the custom, remained confused.

Unskilled in the art of wearing robes of bark, putting one end of the vestment round her neck and holding the other in her hands, she stood perplexed. Then Ramachandra, chief of the good, approaching the princess, fastened the robe of bark over her silken sari. All the ladies of the court, perceiving Rama assisting Sita in putting on the dress of bark, began to weep and timidly addressed the illustrious Rama : " O Beloved Prince, thy father has not granted Shri Sita permission to enter the forest. Do thou enter the forest in accordance with the king's behest, but let not Janaki go with thee. Let our life be fruitful beholding her face. Let Lakshmana go with thee for thy protection, but the beautiful Sita is not fitted to dwell in the forest like an ascetic. O Rama, prompted by dharma, go without delay as thou desirest but, we entreat thee, leave Princess Sita with us."

Shri Rama, knowing that Sita was not willing to stay there in his absence, disregarding the request, helped Sita to don the bark raiment. Shri Vasishtha, the king's preceptor, seeing Sita attired in the habit of an ascetic, was displeased, and said to Kaikeyi : " O Destroyer of thy Dynasty, O Evil-minded Kaikeyi, thou hast deceived the king and now exceed the boons granted to thee, thou art dead to all good sense. It is not for Princess Sita to enter the forest, let her rule in the place of Rama till he return. The wife is, as it were, half of her spouse, therefore, what is his due is hers also. Shri Sita being the half of Shri Rama is in his absence entitled to the throne. Should Shri Sita accompany Rama, then I and all the people of Ayodhya will follow him. Where Rama goes with Sita, there will follow the guards, the people of the kingdom and the citizens of the capital. Yea, even Prince Bharata and Prince Shatraghuna, assuming the robes of ascetics will accompany their elder brother. Then this kingdom abandoned by men, peopled by trees alone, will be governed by thee, O Thou, bent on the destruction of thy subjects. Know well, that is no kingdom where Shri Rama is not king, but the forest in which Rama dwells becomes the kingdom. The king unwillingly consenting, may bestow the kingdom on Bharata, but Bharata will never accept the crown, nor will he honour thee as his mother, if he be the true son of King Dasaratha. Even if thou

shouldst die, yet will Prince Bharata, acquainted with the ancient law, refuse to rule the kingdom as long as his elder brother, Shri Ramachandra lives. Thou, desiring the advancement of thy son, Bharata, seeking to make him king, art in reality bringing him to grief, since all will follow Shri Ramachandra. O Kaikeyi, thou shalt see beasts, snakes, deer, birds and even trees, bend before Rama, swayed by his love, not to speak of men. O Lady, remove the dress of bark and let Sita be attired in royal robes, the ascetic's garb ill befits her."

The Guru Vasishtha forbade Sita to don the robe of bark and said to the queen: "O Daughter of the King Kaikeya, thou hast demanded the exile of Rama alone, let Sita be clad in royal robes when accompanying Rama. The boon exacted by thee did not imply the exile of Shri Sita, therefore, let the princess, beautifully arrayed and adorned, enter the forest in a royal chariot."

Despite the instruction of the resplendent sage, chief among the brahmins and the king's preceptor, Shri Sita, not relinquishing the ascetic's dress, desired to enter the forest, attired like her lord.

CHAPTER 38

Shri Rama requests the king to protect his mother during his absence

SEEING Sita, like a widow though possessing a husband, putting on the habit of bark, all the people present condemned King Dasaratha. The king hearing their murmuring lost all interest in life, virtue and fame, formerly cherished by him. Sighing deeply, he said to his consort Kaikeyi :—

"O Kaikeyi, it is unfitting for Sita to enter the forest wearing the habit of an ascetic. Our holy Guru Vasishtha has spoken truly. Sita is not fitted for life in the forest, that frail princess is worthy of perpetual happiness. Has the daughter of the great Emperor Janaka caused injury to any, that amidst the people

she stands mute, dressed in a robe of bark, like an ascetic? I gave no promise that the daughter of King Janaka should put on the dress of a devotee. Let this princess enter the forest attired in an auspicious manner, with all her ornaments. My death is not far distant and my mind is in confusion; by promising these boons to thee, I have been brought to nought. This act is consuming me as is the bamboo by its flowering.[1] If it be said that Shri Rama has done thee injury, O Sinful One, what harm did Janaki ever do to thee? Of what dost thou accuse the daughter of King Janaka, whose eyes resemble the gazelle's and who is meek and gentle.

"O Wicked One, by sending Rama without reason to the forest, thou shalt assuredly enter hell; what else will not befall thee on account of thy evil deeds?

"When Shri Rama approached me on the eve of his installation, then didst thou forbid him to inaugurate the ceremony and charged him to enter the forest with matted locks in an ascetic's garb. By my silence, I gave consent, but now, desirous of plunging thyself into hell thou requirest Sita to enter the forest robed in the habit of a recluse."

King Dasaratha, lamenting, saw no end to his distress. At length, helpless and overcome with grief, on account of his son, he fell to the ground.

Shri Rama, his head bowed, ready to enter the forest, observing his father's distress, said: "O King, my mother Kaushalya, devoted to her lord, aged and of a generous disposition, who never speaks ill of any, bereft of me will be drowned in a sea of sorrow. She who has hitherto known no suffering is now worthy of thy special regard. O Father, thou to whom honour is due, regard my mother with affectionate attention, that she may not suffer in the separation from her son and the bearing of many woes, but live dependent on thee. O Emperor, equal to Indra in power, protect my mother in my absence that she may not languish and die."

[1] When a bamboo flowers, the whole clump is said to perish.

CHAPTER 39

As they prepare for departure the palace resounds with grief

HEARING the words of Rama and beholding him in the guise of an ascetic, the king lost consciousness and his consorts turned away in distress. Overcome with grief, the wretched monarch could neither look on Rama nor utter a word to him and for a space remained insensible. Then, regaining consciousness, the long-armed king, remembering Rama, began to lament: "Now, without doubt, I know that in some previous birth, I separated many calves from their mothers and deprived many beings of their lives, on account of which all this has befallen me. The vital airs do not leave the body before the appointed time; though tormented by Kaikeyi, yet death does not claim me. Alas! I behold Shri Ramachandra, resplendent as fire, divested of his royal robes and attired in ascetic's garb. This evil caused by Kaikeyi, through guile and the desire for personal advantage is the source of universal distress."

The king's eyes were suffused with tears and crying: "Rama, Rama," his throat choked, and he could utter no more. After some time, still shedding tears, he addressed Sumantra, saying: "Yoke the best steeds to the chariot and convey Shri Rama out of the city. Now it is made clear that a man's virtue leads him into affliction, since so wise and valiant a son is being banished by his parents."

As instructed by the king, Sumantra yoked the most excellent of steeds to a richly decorated chariot and bringing the golden car with the best steeds yoked thereto, before the prince, said humbly: "The chariot is at hand."

The king then summoned his upright and trustworthy treasurer and spoke to him in words suitable to the place and time: "Bring hither for Janaki, costly apparel and ornaments to serve the princess for fourteen years." As instructed by the king, the master of the treasury brought the various articles and delivered them to Princess Sita. The highly born Sita, attiring herself in a sumptuous robe and ornaments, made ready to depart for the forest. Thus attired, Shri Janaki illumined the palace as the rays of the rising sun illumine the sky.

Queen Kaushalya embraced the princess of virtuous conduct to her bosom and blessing her said: " The world is filled with undutiful wives, who cease to regard their lord when he has fallen into distress. Such is the nature of those who having enjoyed great pleasures, on finding their consort involved in trouble, condemn and sometimes even abandon him. Many are the women, untruthful, heartless, unchaste, devious[1] and vain, full of evil passions, the destroyers of long-honoured ties. Neither a worthy family nor duty, nor the instruction of the Guru, nor gifts, sway them, nor do they honour the marriage ties, their minds being fickle. But those women devoted to their husbands, of virtuous conduct, honouring the tradition of their family, truthful, following the instructions of their preceptor, regard their lord as the chief of men. Therefore, do not condemn my son, now ready to enter the forest, who should be regarded by thee rather as a deity, whether in poverty or prosperity."

Shri Sita, understanding the import of these words, inspired by dharma, humbly replied: O Noble Lady, I will fulfil thy commands. It is known to me that a woman should serve her lord, and my parents have instructed me in the matter. Do not deem me a false woman. I am as unable to forsake the path of virtue as the sun's light the moon. As a lute is useless without strings, as a chariot cannot move without wheels, so is a wife bereft of her husband, even if she have a hundred sons.

" Father, mother or son can give but a small measure of happiness, but a husband is the source of limitless joy. What woman is so unworthy that she will not obey her husband? I am acquainted with all the duties of a wife, being instructed by those eminent in virtue. A husband is as a god to his consort, never shall I not honour him."

The simple-hearted queen, shedding tears of distress on account of the separation from her son, hearing Princess Sita's words, was comforted.

Then Rama said: " O Mother, when I am in the forest, do not look on my father with a reproachful countenance, the term of my exile will soon be ended. The fourteen years will

[1] Whose minds are not easily known.

pass like a dream. Surrounded by my friends, thou shalt behold me serving my sire."

Speaking thus to his mother Kaushalya, Shri Rama reflected how to address the three hundred and fifty other consorts of the king. To these who were bitterly lamenting, he spoke with humility. "While living amongst you, if I have ever, in ignorance, offended you, be gracious enough to pardon me." These pious and humble words of Rama, inspired by dharma, touched the hearts of the queens, causing them to shed tears and their lamentations resembled the sound of krouncha birds.

The palace of the king, formerly resounding to the beating of drums resembling the crash of thunder, was to-day filled with the wailing of the sorrow-stricken queens.

CHAPTER 40

All Ayodhya is distressed to see Shri Rama's chariot depart

SHRI RAMA overcome with grief, touched the feet of his sovereign and bowing down, with Lakshmana and Sita, circumambulated the king. Having taken leave of his sire, Rama with Sita paid reverence to the sorrow-stricken Queen Kaushalya.

Then Shri Lakshmana bowed before the Queen Kaushalya and embraced the feet of his mother Sumitra. His mother weeping, desiring her son's good, blessed Lakshmana and said: "O My Son, Shri Rama was born of Queen Kaushalya for the protection of the world, and I have borne thee so that, devoted to Shri Rama, thou shouldst accompany him to the forest. O My Son, do not neglect the service of Shri Rama. O Sinless One, whether in fortune or in adversity, regard him as thy life! It is the duty of the good to be subject to their elders. The tradition of thy dynasty is the giving of charity, the performance of sacrifice, death on the field of battle and implicit regard for thine elders."

Speaking thus, Sumitra seeing Rama ready to depart for the forest, again and again exhorted Lakshmana in this wise: "O

My Son, enter the forest with Rama. O Child, have no anxiety, do not grieve either for thy father, mother, home or country, esteem Rama to be Dasaratha, Janaki as myself and the forest equal to Ayodhya."

Sumantra now addressed Rama with humility as Matali[1] addresses Indra: " O Illustrious Prince, be pleased to mount the chariot, I will take thee wheresoever thou desirest. Let the period of thine exile enjoined by Kaikeyi begin to-day."

Then the beautiful daughter of King Janaka, adorned with the jewels, bestowed on her by the king, cheerfully mounted the waiting vehicle, which shone like the sun. Shri Rama and Lakshmana also swiftly ascended the chariot enriched with gold and weapons.

Having regard to the period of exile, King Dasaratha had bestowed on his daughter-in-law, robes and jewels and ordered arms and mantra-charged weapons, armour and shields to be placed on the chariot. Seeing that all were mounted, Sumantra set the chariot in motion guiding the horses swift as the wind. Rama having started for the Dandaka forest, the whole city, young and old, men and women, soldiers, elephants and horses, distracted and full of indignation and distress, became as beings demented. The loosing of elephants, and the loud neighing of horses filled Ayodhya with tumult and ferment. Young and old, distraught, ran after the chariot of Rama as men overpowered by the sun plunge into water. Some running beside the royal car, some behind looking up towards Rama, others weeping and lamenting, cried to Sumantra: " O Charioteer, drive slowly, draw in thy steeds, so that we may see the face of Rama so soon to be hidden from us. Surely the heart of his mother must be made of steel that it did not break on seeing the godlike prince departing for the forest. Great indeed is Shri Sita, who follows her husband like a shadow, as the light of the sun that never forsakes the Meru mountain. O Lakshmana, perfect art thou, constantly serving thine amiable and godlike brother. This is perfection, this is prosperity, thus to attend thy brother is the way to heaven."

Thus lamenting, following the chariot of Rama, the people could not restrain their tears. The afflicted and wretched

[1] Matali—Indra's charioteer.

monarch, King Dasaratha, overcome with grief, coming forth from the palace barefooted, surrounded by his queens, cried out: "I must again behold my beloved son." Then he heard the lament of the women wailing like she elephants when their mates are bound in chains, and like the full moon in eclipse, King Dasaratha was bereft of his splendour.

Shri Rama, free from anxiety, urged the charioteer on, saying: "Faster! faster!" and as he spoke, enjoining Sumantra to drive more speedily, the people cried, "Stay, stay", so that the charioteer knew not how to obey both commands. The dust raised by the wheels of Rama's chariot was laid by the tears of the people. As Shri Rama left the city, the people weeping and bewildered were distraught, the tears of the women falling like drops of water on lotus leaves, when fishes leap. The people following Rama's chariot and perceiving the anguish of the king, wept in sympathy. A great tumult now arose from the ladies of the palace and the king's attendants all weeping and crying, "O Rama! O Kaushalya!" and hearing the wailing and lamentation of the people Shri Rama looked back and beheld the king and his mother Kaushalya, barefooted, following his chariot, and was filled with sorrow. Shri Rama, bound by the cord of duty, turned his eyes from his parents, as a foal not permitted to follow its dam. Perceiving his royal parents, unacquainted with suffering, worthy of excellent chariots, running barefooted towards him, he said to Sumantra: "Drive on speedily!" unable to bear the sight of his parents' distress, as an elephant is unable to bear the goad. His mother Kaushalya trembling and tottering, ran towards him, like a cow hearing the cries of her calf that has been bound, crying, "O Rama! O Sita! O Lakshmana!" The king calling, "Stay! Stay!" to the charioteer, with Rama crying, "Go forward speedily", caused the heart of Sumantra to be riven, like one standing between two rival armies.

On this, Rama addressed him, saying: "On thy return to the palace, when charged by the king with disobeying his commands, do thou say: 'Amidst the noise of the rolling wheels, I was unable to hear.' Further delay will prove calamitous." Shri Sumantra regarding the words of the prince, signalling the people following to return, urged the horses on.

The chariot outstripping the king, caused him to halt with his household and mentally circumambulating Rama, he returned to the palace. The courtiers now said to the king: " None follows a friend far, whom he wishes to see return." King Dasaratha hearing this injunction, bathed in perspiration, utterly wretched, stood gazing at the receding chariot.

CHAPTER 41

The whole world grieves for Prince Rama

THAT Lion among men, Prince Ramachandra, having in humility departed, a great cry of distress arose among the ladies of the inner apartment. They cried: " Where is Ramachandra, the only asylum and refuge of the orphaned, the weak and the suffering? Where is Prince Rama, who when provoked, showed no anger, who caused no agitation to any heart, who appeased those who were wrathful, and considered others' distress as his own? Where is that Rama now, who treated us with the same regard as he showed his illustrious mother, Queen Kaushalya? Where is he wandering now, that Rama, Protector of the World, who has gone to the forest, persecuted by Kaikeyi, and exiled by his father? O, how insensible the king has grown, that he has sent the virtuous and truthful Rama, the object of universal love, into exile." In this way, all the ladies of the court wept aloud like cows who have been bereft of their calves. The king overwhelmed with grief on account of separation from his son, suffered increasingly on hearing the loud and piteous cries of the ladies of the palace. On the prince's departure, no brahmachari performed the fire ceremony, no householder prepared food but passed the day in deep distress. The elephants cast off their trappings and the cows refused to nourish their calves, mothers showed no delight at the sight of their first-born. Trishanku, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn and Venus and other inauspicious planets gathered round the moon, pulsating there; the stars lost their brilliance and the planets their splendour.

Vishaka,[1] growing dim, was scarcely distinguishable in the sky. The clouds, driven by a strong wind, overtaking each other, resembled waves rising in the sea. When Shri Rama departed, an earthquake caused the city to tremble, the ten cardinal points were covered in darkness, neither were the planets nor the stars visible. All the inhabitants of the city were overwhelmed with misery, none partook of food that day or found pleasure in any pastime. All the people of Ayodhya, sighing heavily, were filled with sorrow and grieved for the king. Those walking in the streets wept and nowhere was there any sign of joy. No cool breezes blew, nor did the moon shine, the rays of the sun were weak and the whole world mourned for Rama. Sons gave no thought to their parents, husbands were indifferent to their wives and brothers showed no affection to each other; all were sunk in grief. The friends of Rama, unconscious of themselves and filled with distress, were bereft of sleep. Without Rama, Ayodhya resembled the earth with all its mountains, suffering from drought. Every household was consumed with grief and the cries of elephants, horses and warriors filled the city.

CHAPTER 42

Without Rama the king's heart finds no rest

So long as the dust raised by the wheels of Rama's chariot could be seen, so long did the king not withdraw his gaze from the way. So long as King Dasaratha could see his beloved and most virtuous son, Shri Ramachandra, so long did he stand gazing after him, and when the dust was no more visible, the wretched monarch, stricken with grief fell to the earth. Then Queen Kaushalya taking hold of his right hand and Queen Kaikeyi his left, ministered to him. The virtuous and upright king beholding Queen Kaikeyi near him, said: "O Wicked Queen, touch me not, I do not desire to see thy countenance. Thou art neither my consort, nor do I desire

[1] Vishaka—a lunar astrism, appearing in October.

relationship with thee; thy servants are no longer my servants, nor am I their master. Thou, who hast abandoned obedience to thy lord, I now repudiate. Thy hand, accepted by me when circumambulating the sacred fire, I relinquish, and renounce the worldly and spiritual pledges given thee in the ceremony. If Bharata, receiving this kingdom, is satisfied, then let him not perform my obsequies."

Queen Kaushalya, torn with grief, raised the king, soiled with dust, and conveyed him to his chariot. The king sorely afflicted, remembering his son in ascetic's garb, resembled one who has murdered a brahmin or touches a blazing fire with his naked hand. Turning again and again towards the path that the chariot had taken, the king's countenance resembled the sun in eclipse. Conceiving his son Rama to have passed beyond the city boundary, and thinking of him, he again gave way to grief, crying: "I see the marks of the hoofs of the horses that were yoked to the chariot of my son, but him I do not see. Alas! My Son, who perfumed with sandalpaste, slept on soft pillows, fanned by beautiful women, to-day sleeps beneath a tree with wood or stone for his pillow. In the morning, he will awake on the hard ground, his mind oppressed, his body smeared with dust, sighing deeply like a bull rising from beside a spring. The dwellers in the forest will behold Rama rising like an orphan and wandering as one forlorn. That daughter of King Janaka worthy of every happiness, her feet pierced with thorns, hearing the roar of animals like tigers, will be struck with terror; O Kaikeyi, thy ambition is fulfilled, now rule the kingdom as a widow for I cannot support life without the chief of men."

Thus lamenting, the king returned to the capital, like a man having cremated one supremely dear to him. He beheld courts and houses deserted, the markets forsaken and the temples closed, while on the royal highway only the feeble and afflicted were to be seen. Seeing the city desolate and remembering Shri Rama, weeping bitterly, the king entered the palace as the sun enters a cloud. As the presence of an eagle deprives a lake of its serpents, rendering it still, so did the capital appear when Shri Rama, Lakshmana and Sita had gone into exile.

Then the king in distress, his throat choked with grief, spoke in faint and trembling accents: "Take me speedily to the palace

of Queen Kaushalya, the mother of Rama, nowhere else can I obtain peace."

The attendants carried the king to the apartments of Queen Kaushalya and placed him on a couch, but the king's heart could find no rest; the palace without Rama, Lakshmana and Sita appeared to him like the sky bereft of the moon. Finding no delight there, the king lifting up his hands, cried: "O My Son, O Rama, art thou leaving me? How blessed are they who seeing Rama return, will embrace him."

Finding the night dark, resembling the hour of death, the king at midnight thus addressed Kaushalya: "O Kaushalya, I do not see thee, my sight has followed Rama, nor has it yet returned, therefore, reach forth thy hand and touch me, O Queen."

Seeing her royal consort merged in the remembrance of Rama, the queen, sighing, seated herself by the king and began to lament in sympathy with him.

CHAPTER 43

The lament of Queen Kaushalya

QUEEN KAUSHALYA, deeply afflicted by the separation from her son, seeing the king lying on the couch merged in grief, said: "O King, that evil Kaikeyi having discharged her poison on Shri Rama, will wander about at will, like a snake that has cast its slough. That sinful woman, having accomplished her design and sent Rama to the forest will ever inspire me with terror, like a venomous serpent in the home. If her demand had been that Rama should dwell in the city on alms or had she condemned him to be her slave, it were better than exile. She has cast out Rama, as the oblation offered to the asuras is cast away by those who tend the sacrificial fire. The long armed Rama, the wielder of the great bow, walking like the king of elephants, must by now have reached the forest with Sita and Lakshmana. O King, consider how thy son Rama, who has never before experienced suffering, is banished by thee, urged by Kaikeyi! O What fate

will befall them now? Without wealth, exiled in his youth when a king's happiness should have been his portion, how will he be able to live on roots and berries in the forest? Will the time ever come when I shall see Rama, Lakshmana and Sita return, putting an end to my sorrow? When will that glad day dawn, when the illustrious capital filled with rejoicing crowds, decorated with flags, banners and garlands, welcomes Rama? O will that auspicious hour ever strike, when the citizens hearing of his return will be filled with gladness, like the sea at the time of the full moon? When will Shri Rama with Sita, enter the city, like the bull who, at dusk, preceding the herd of cows, returns to the town. When will the people of the capital, waiting to scatter rice over him, gather in thousands on the highways to welcome Rama, the subduer of his foes? O, when shall I see my sons, resplendent as two mountain peaks, return to Ayodhya, adorned with earrings, bearing the sword and scimitar. When will the two princes, circumambulating the city with Janaki, receive gifts of flowers and fruit from the hands of virgins and brahmins? When will the virtuous and sagacious Rama run towards me, leaping like a child? Surely my love pours forth for him, as the breasts of mothers when suckling their infants. O Great King, because of this, Kaikeyi has increased my love for my child; bereft of him, I am like a cow whose calf has been forcibly carried away by a lion. My only son Rama is versed in all the classics and endowed with every excellent quality; without such a son, I cannot live. O Great King, I cannot sustain life in the absence of my brave and beloved son; the fire of grief caused by the separation from my son is consuming me, as the rays of the sun in summer consume the surface of the earth."

CHAPTER 44

She finds peace in the consolation of Queen Sumitra

The righteous Queen Sumitra hearing the lament of Queen Kaushalya addressed her in reasonable words: "O Queen, why dost thou weep in abject fashion, for thy son, the chief of men, endowed with every virtue? O Noble Lady, Shri Rama has renounced the throne and entered the forest to render his father illustrious, as the votary of truth. Shri Rama, honouring his father, has conducted himself as the best of men and secured the future glory of his sire. There is no cause for grief, since Rama is treading the path of dharma, neither is there cause to grieve for Lakshmana, ever compassionate to all, sinless, serving Rama and in every way worthy of the highest good. The tender-limbed Janaki, too, is following thy virtuous son. O Queen, the exile of Rama is no cause for sorrow since he is the protector of all beings and the follower of virtue. O Queen, the banner of his good name waves over the three worlds. Consider the purity of Rama; even the sun dares not cause him suffering by its rays. In his presence, the hot winds of the forest in summer will grow cool and like the spring breeze bring him refreshment! When asleep in the forest at night, the moon, like a father, will succour him with its cool beams. That Ramachandra, to whom the Brahmarishi Vishwamitra gave celestial weapons on the death of his son Shambara, that valorous son, that lion among men, depending on the strength of his arms will dwell in the forest as fearlessly as in his own palace. That hero whose arrows destroy his foes, is certain to be succoured by the earth. That Rama, endowed with great prowess, power and courage, will soon return on the termination of his exile, to claim the kingdom. O Lady, Shri Rama, who illumines the sun which gives light to the whole world, who gives splendour to the fire, who is the supreme ruler of rulers, who is the fame of fame and the essence of forgiveness, who is the chief of beings; wherever he dwells, in the forest or the city, all is one to him. Shri Rama, this great hero, will speedily regain his kingdom, together with Sita, the earth and every prosperity.

Shri Rama for whom, when departing for the forest, the people of Ayodhya filled with grief, shed tears, will soon regain the kingdom. Nought is difficult to obtain in the world by him, who, though invincible, entered the forest, dressed like an ascetic, followed by Sita, who is Lakshmi[1] in another form.

"What should be difficult for him, who, armed with bow and sword, is preceded on his way by Lakshmana? O Lady, abandon grief and infatuation, assuredly thou wilt behold Shri Rama returning from his exile. O Thou who art irreproachable, O Kalyani, O Auspicious One, thou wilt behold thy son like the rising moon, placing his head at thy feet. Thou wilt shed tears of joy, seeing thy son installed on the throne and in possession of the king's treasury. O Lady, neither grieve nor let thy mind be troubled, I see nought that is inauspicious in respect of Rama. Soon thou shalt behold thy son with Sita and Lakshmana. O Sinless Queen, it becomes thee to encourage others, therefore, why dost thou now cause thy heart distress? O Devi, do not grieve, there is none in the world more virtuous than Rama. Seeing Rama returning from the forest with his friends, making obeisance to thee, then wilt thou shed tears of joy, like the clouds in the rainy season. In brief, I tell thee, thy son Shri Rama, returning to the capital, will press thy feet to him with his tender hands. Seeing thy son bowing to thy feet thou wilt cover him with tears as the clouds cover the mountains with rain."

Thus did the beautiful Sumitra, ever persuasive and benevolent to all, offer words of consolation to the Queen Kaushalya and having spoken, became silent. The chief queen, the mother of Shri Rama, hearing the words of Queen Sumitra, found peace and forgot her grief which resembled the rain of the autumn clouds that swiftly disappears.

[1] Lakshmi—The Consort of Shri Vishnu.

CHAPTER 45

The lament of the brahmins who follow Shri Rama

The people of the capital, deeply devoted to Shri Rama, the Upholder of Truth, followed him on his way to the forest. Though King Dasaratha, on the advice of his ministers, turned back, the citizens of Ayodhya continued to run beside the chariot of Rama. The inhabitants of the city were devoted to Rama whose virtues rendered him resplendent like the full moon, and weeping piteously, implored the holy prince to return, but Rama, determined to prove his father to be true to his word, pressed on towards the forest. They, looking on Rama as a thirsty man looks on water, were addressed by him with tender affection as a father addresses his children.

He said: "O Ye People of Ayodhya, for my sake bestow the love and honour shown to me, in even greater measure, on Bharata! Prince Bharata, who is of an excellent disposition, will assuredly deal benevolently with you and endear himself to you. Though young, he is wise, gentle and endowed with great courage. Warm-hearted and charitable, you will have no cause for fear on his accession to the throne. King Dasaratha has appointed him heir-apparent in consideration of his great virtue, we should therefore obey the king. When I am absent in the forest, you should so act towards him as to occasion him no distress. Do you, desirous of pleasing me, obey the king."

Rama, instructing the people to obey the king again and again only increased their desire to see him as their sovereign. It appeared that Rama with Lakshmana drew the distressed and weeping inhabitants of the city after them as if bound by a cord.

Among the elders in age, wisdom and austerity, the first, their heads trembling with advanced years, calling from a distance, said: "O Ye Swift and Excellent Steeds, return, return, do not proceed further and favour Rama. All beings are endowed with perception, but you excel in the sense of hearing, therefore hear our entreaty and turn back. We know

the heart of our master to be simple and gentle, we know him to be a hero firm in his vows, therefore, return to Ayodhya, do not carry Rama away from the city to the forest."

Hearing the lament of the aged brahmins and perceiving their distress, Shri Rama, causing the chariot to halt, dismounted. With Lakshmana and Sita, he walked towards the forest, followed by the multitude, proceeding slowly on foot. The ever virtuous and compassionate Rama was unable to endure the sight of the aged brahmins walking on foot, far behind the chariot.

The brahmins seeing Rama did not return, despite their supplications, but still proceeded towards the forest, were troubled and overcome with distress, cried: " O Rama, thou art a friend of the brahmins and the whole caste is following thee with the sacred fire borne on their shoulders. See, we are carrying the holy canopies, like autumn clouds, obtained by us by observing the Vaja-peya[1] ceremony. By covering thee with their shade, we will protect thee from the rays of the sun. O Child, formerly thy mind was set on the study of the Veda, but now thou art determined to enter the forest. Our only wealth, the Veda, we have stored in our memory and our consorts are at home, protected by their conjugal devotion. There is no cause for further reflection, we are determined to go with thee! If thou dost not walk in the path of dharma, who will follow it ?[2]

" O Rama, what more can be said? We, whose heads are white like swan's down, offer humble salutations to thee. Among us, some have entered upon their sacrifices, O Rama, their completion depends on thee. Not we alone, but beasts, birds and trees, entreat thee to return; have pity on all these. Trees desiring to follow thee, prevented by their roots which penetrate deep into the earth, implore thee not to depart, their branches bending low in the wind. See the birds, forgetting to seek their food, sit motionless on the trees, supplicating thee who art compassionate to all."

Thus lamenting, the brahmins beheld the river Tamasa as if obstructing the path of Rama, preventing his further progress.

[1] Vaja-peya.—A sacrifice at which a drink of this name is prepared for the gods.
[2] That is, show implicit obedience to the brahmins.

Then Sumantra, loosing the tired horses, let them roll on the ground to relieve their fatigue and gave them to drink causing them to bathe in the river, and allowing them to graze on the banks of the Tamasa.

CHAPTER 46

Shri Rama, with Sita and Lakshmana and the charioteer drive on alone to the forest

SHRI RAMA, reaching the beautiful banks of the river Tamasa, gazing on Sita, addressed his brother Lakshmana: "O Son of Queen Sumitra, this is the first night of our exile, there is no cause for anxiety. The forest looks deserted and melancholy, the birds and beasts having retired to rest. Doubtless the capital of Ayodhya with its inhabitants and my royal sire are deeply distressed on account of our departure. The king, seeing in us many virtues, looks on us with deep affection. O Lakshmana, I fear lest my father and my illustrious mother become blind with incessant weeping. Yet Prince Bharata of upright conduct, will assuredly offer consolation to my parents in dutiful and pious words. O Mighty-armed Prince, reflecting on the compassion of Prince Bharata, I have no fear for my parents. O Hero, thou hast done well in accompanying me to the forest, had it not been so, my solicitude for Sita would have been great. O Lakshmana, there is an abundance of roots, fruits and berries here, but to-night I desire to partake of water alone."

Having thus addressed Prince Lakshmana, Shri Rama said to Sumantra: "O Gentle Friend, attend to the horses with great care." The sun having set below the horizon, Sumantra, fastening the horses to a tree, placed tender grass before them, heedful of their welfare. The time of Sandhya[1] having come, the charioteer observed his devotions according to the rules of his caste, then, with the help of Lakshmana, prepared a bed

[1] Sandhya—Evening devotions.

for Rama. Perceiving the bed made with tender leaves, on the banks of the Tamasa, Shri Rama with Sita and Lakshmana rested there.

Finding Shri Rama and Sitá sleeping, Lakshmana, leaving his seat, recounted the excellent virtues of Rama to the charioteer. Lakshmana thus passed the whole night till the sun rose, conversing with Sumantra on the attributes of Rama.

In this manner, on the banks of the Tamasa, among herds of cattle, Shri Rama and those who had followed him, passed the night. At dawn, Shri Rama rose and seeing the people still asleep, said to his virtuous brother Lakshmana :—

" O Lakshmana, see how these people, abandoning their homes and property, to follow us, are sleeping under the trees. It seems that they, vowing to bring us back, will give up their lives rather than be false to their determination. Let us, therefore, O Brother, leave this place before they wake. When we have crossed the Tamasa, there will be no further cause for anxiety. By our silent departure, the people of the capital of King Ikshwaku, will not, like us, be compelled to sleep under the trees. It is the duty of a prince to preserve them from suffering and not make them the companions of his distress."

Shri Lakshmana answered Ramachandra, saying : " O Wise One, I accept thy resolve, let us mount the chariot immediately."

Rama then said to Sumantra : " Speedily prepare the chariot, I will proceed towards the forest, let us therefore depart from hence without delay."

The charioteer, hastily yoking the horses to the chariot, humbly addressed Rama, saying : " O Great Prince, the chariot is now ready, please ascend with Lakshmana and Sita ; may prosperity attend thee."

Shri Rama with his bow, quiver and other weapons, mounted the chariot and passed over the swiftly flowing river. Crossing the Tamasa, at a short distance from the shore, they traversed a rugged path overgrown with briars, and then came to a wide road, where they could travel with ease and which was safe from any danger. To elude the citizens, Shri Rama said to Sumantra: " O Charioteer, drive first towards the south. Having thus

driven for a space, return again, so that no trace of us may be found."

Shri Sumantra, following the instructions of Rama, drove forward, then returning, stood before Rama. The son of Dasaratha, the augmenter of the glory of the house of Raghu, spoke from the chariot, saying: "Now drive towards Tapovana."

Sumantra, turning the chariot towards the north, proceeded in the direction of the forest.

CHAPTER 47

Those who have followed Prince Rama find themselves alone

THE night being over and the day having dawned, the citizens awoke and not beholding Rama, were overwhelmed with grief, not knowing how to act. Seeking here and there, their eyes bathed in tears, they were unable to discover by what path Shri Rama had departed. Wretched and pale with distress, with quivering hearts and utterly dispirited, they broke into piteous exclamations, saying:—

"Cursed be the sleep that veiled our perceptions, now we shall not behold the full chested and large-eyed Rama. How fruitless is our devotion, since Rama has gone to the forest leaving us, his faithful friends, here. Why has Rama who ever treated us as his children, left us to enter the forest? Either we will find death here or go to the Himalayas and perish in the snow. What avails life without Rama? Here is dried wood, let us collect it and kindling a fire, perish in the flames. What shall we say on our return? Shall we tell others we have abandoned the mighty armed Rama, who is free from envy and a votary of truth? Alas! we cannot do so. The wretched city with the women, the aged and the children, seeing us return without Rama, will be plunged in grief. Having abandoned our homes to follow that self-controlled prince, how can we venture to face the people without him?"

Thus lamenting, with uplifted arms, filled with distress, they resembled cows bereft of their young. Following the track of the chariot wheels, they pressed forward, till, losing their trace, they became prostrate with grief. Finding no further path to follow, they turned back crying: "Alas! what shall we do? Fate is against us!" Then, by the way by which they had come, they retraced their steps to Ayodhya.

Shri Rama, failing to return, the people became restless, and seeing the capital cheerless, despondent and sorrow-stricken, they wept, murmuring to each other: "The city, bereft of Rama, has no beauty, it resembles a dried-up river, divested of its snakes by an eagle." As the sky without the moon or the sea without water, so did the city appear to the people, causing their hearts to faint within them.

Sadly entering their magnificent dwellings, afflicted and distraught, they were unable to distinguish one of their own relatives from a stranger.

CHAPTER 48

Ayodhya without Shri Ramachandra is bereft of beauty

Thus afflicted, the people of the capital, their eyes streaming with tears, longed to give up their lives. Having followed Rama to the forest, they became melancholy and appeared to be almost lifeless. In their homes, with their wives and sons, they lamented bitterly. None rejoiced, none were cheerful, none decked out their children to advantage, nor did the women adorn themselves; no fire burnt on the hearth of any home, none was glad to recover the wealth he had lost and none rejoiced at a sudden increase of riches. Mothers found no delight in the return of their first-born after a long absence. Every house was filled with wailing; the husbands returning without Rama were upbraided by their wives with bitter words, as an elephant is goaded by its driver. Everywhere was heard: "Without beholding Ramachandra, of what use to us are our

homes, women, wealth, sons or pleasure? There is only one who is truly virtuous and it is Lakshmana, who has followed Rama and Sita to the forest! How fortunate are those lakes and rivers filled with lotuses, whose waters, Rama, entering to bathe, doth purify! Beautiful forests, rivers with verdant banks, lakes and mountains will be adorned by the presence of Shri Ramachandra. Those mountains visited by Rama, recognizing their beloved guest, will honour him with due hospitality.

"The trees also, their branches laden with flowers and buds, in which the bees are humming and murmuring, will offer their beauty to Rama. The hills will send forth flowers out of season and yield fruit and blossom in his honour. The crystal waterfalls of varied beauty will gush forth from the mountains to give delight to him. The trees, growing on the slope of the mountains, will enchant him. Where Rama is, fear and danger are banished. The heroic sons of King Dasaratha, even now, are but a little distance from us; come let us follow them. There is no happiness save in the service of the holy Feet of that illumined One. Verily he is the only Lord of the world, the Absolute, the Highest State and our sole support."

The women of the city, overcome with grief, addressing their husbands said: "Let us follow Rama, we will serve Shri Sita, you attend on Shri Rama. Remember, Rama will preserve and maintain you in the forest, while Shri Sita will grant support to us. Of what use is life where the heart is restless and the mind bereft of purpose? If Kaikeyi rule the kingdom setting aside the moral law, what delight can we have in children and possessions; even our lives will become valueless. Will Kaikeyi be solicitous on our account, she, who has abandoned King Dasaratha and her son Shri Ramachandra, for the sake of power? We swear by our sons that while we live, we will never be slaves to Kaikeyi. Who can live happily under the rule of that shameless and evil woman who pitilessly exiled the son of the king? Without a ruler the defenceless kingdom will become a prey to every misfortune and perish on account of Kaikeyi's evil deeds. The king will not long survive the exile of Rama and without him the kingdom will be destroyed. Our good karma being exhausted we are miserable; let us either have recourse to poison, or follow Rama, or seek some other place and

live there unknown. By exiling Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, through false means we have been made subject to Bharata's governance as beasts are lead to the slaughter. Shri Rama, a source of delight resembling the full moon, the destroyer of his foes, mighty-armed, Lakshmana's elder brother, whose eyes are like lotuses, who speaks in gentle accents, who is brave, guileless and beloved of the people, will assuredly adorn the forest wheresoever he roams."

The women of the city distressed by their separation from Rama, wept and mourned as do the friends of a dying man. Lamenting thus, the sun set and the night fell, no sacrificial fires were visible, nor did the brahmins, devoted to the study of the Veda, intone the sacred texts, or recite the Puranas, and in no dwelling was any lamp kindled. The city of Ayodhya, stricken and destitute, the stalls of merchandise forsaken, was bereft of beauty like the sky divested of stars. The women of Ayodhya, filled with sorrow as if their own sons or brothers had been banished, wept bitterly, Shri Ramachandra being dearer to them than their own children. In the city, no songs or music was heard, nor was there dancing or any sign of rejoicing. The merchant ceased to expose their merchandise and sat sunk in dejection. Thus Ayodhya, without joy or activity, appeared as desolate as an ocean without water.

CHAPTER 49

The chariot crosses the boundary of Koshala

SHRI RAMA, remembering his father's command, had travelled far through the night. Day dawned while he was still journeying; offering up his morning prayer, he continued on his way, soon reaching the southern boundary of Koshala.

Enjoying the cultivated fields, the forests, and trees laden with blossom, he drove on, drawn by swift horses. As he passed, he heard the people of the villages and hamlets conversing thus: "Woe unto King Dasaratha enslaved by concupiscence.

Ah! how hard is the heart of the wicked Kaikeyi, how cruel her disposition; violating the ancient tradition, she has performed this evil deed, she who has banished the Prince of Light, who is erudite, compassionate and self-controlled. How will the daughter of King Janaka, brought up in ease, endure the hardships of the forest? Alas! The king has no love for his son or he would not have abandoned one so perfect, who is devoted to the welfare of all."

Hearing the words of the villagers, Shri Rama pressed on quickly and crossed the boundary of Koshala. Then fording the river Vedasruti, a pure stream, he proceeded south. After traversing a great distance, he came to the cool waters of the Gaumati flowing towards the sea, with many cows grazing on its banks. The swift steeds, restrained by Rama, crossed this river and then the Syandika, on whose banks peacocks and ducks were heard. Rama here showed Sita the land formerly given by Manu to Ikshwaku, a spacious and open country of many principalities. Then Shri Rama, whose voice resembled an enchanted swan, addressed Sumantra, saying: "O Charioteer, when will the day come, when I, returning from the forest in company with my parents, will sport in the flowering woods of Sarayu? To hunt in the forest is the prerogative of royal sages. It is the favourite pursuit of kings and others also incline to it. I do not deem it evil and desire to engage in it when the season of my austerities is over."

Thus firm in his purpose, Shri Ramachandra continued to converse sweetly with Sumantra.

CHAPTER 50

They reach the river Gunga and meet the chief of ferrymen, Guha

HAVING crossed the boundary of Koshala, Rama, turning his face towards Ayodhya, with joined palms, addressed the city:

" O Ayodhya, Chief of Cities, protected by the kings of the House of Ikshwaku, I take leave of thee and of the gods thy protectors who dwell with thee. Having fulfilled the command of the king, I shall, returning from the forest, again behold thee and my parents."

Then lifting up his arms, Shri Rama, the tears falling from his eyes, addressed the citizens of his father's kingdom: "O Ye Who have treated me with the respect and affection due to a master, it is not meet that you remain with me, now return to your homes and discharge the duties of your households."

Bowing down to Shri Rama, the people circumambulated him with reverence and turned homewards, frequently halting, weeping and lamenting. Shri Rama, seeing them weeping and not yet satisfied with beholding him, told the charioteer to drive on speedily and passed beyond their sight as the sun sinks out of view at the time of evening.

Proceeding on his way, Shri Rama beheld prosperous towns and villages full of men of charitable, righteous and fearless disposition evidenced by the abundance of temples and sacrificial pillars of their cities. The gardens filled with mango trees were enriched by pools of translucent water with carefully tended highways and herds of cattle grazing here and there. Everywhere the recitation of the Veda could be heard. From his chariot, Shri Rama surveyed the Kingdom of Koshala and passed beyond its confines. The sagacious Rama, proceeding through the extensive land inhabited by happy and prosperous people, enriched by pleasant gardens, came to the southern boundary of Koshala and beheld the holy Gunga, adorned by the presence of the sages, with its cool waters flowing in three directions. Near the bank of the sacred river, he saw the beautiful hermitages, frequented by holy men and pools of limpid water visited by celestial nymphs at play. The holy Ganges, honoured by deities, titans, celestial musicians and naiads, that sacred current, displaying innumerable charming vistas, embellished by the gardens of the gods, and which in heaven is named the " Stream of Golden Lotuses ", that holy river, the sound of whose clashing waves resembles deep laughter, which moving rapidly, covered with foam white as snow, flows merrily forwards

and falling from the heights on the rocks below, resembles a maiden's plaited locks; sometimes made beautiful by whirlpools, here dark and deep, there with the roar of waters, proclaiming the presence of Shri Gunga herself; those sacred waters wherein the celestial beings plunge and swim, where white lotuses float, bordered by high banks or shelving sands; there, where swans, cranes, and chakur birds are heard, where trees adorn the banks and waterlilies float or fields of lotus flowers whose buds reveal their tender beauty carpet the tide. Sometimes the waters, reddened by the petals of lotuses, make the river appear like a lovely woman attired in a crimson sari; those sparkling waters, green as emerald, where mighty tuskers sport and also the great guardian elephants of the earth's four quarters, or those bearing the gods, where the sound of Hara! Hara! resounds forever. Shri Gunga, beautiful as a woman, tastefully adorned with brilliant gems; Shri Gunga, enriched with fruit, flowers and birds of every hue, abounding in porpoises, crocodiles and serpents; that sacred stream, falling from the feet of the Blessed Vishnu, divine and spotless, the destroyer of others' sin, having sported in the locks of Shri Shiva, thereafter descending on earth, through the power of the penance of Bhagiratha.

Shri Rama, proceeding towards the city of Shringavera, seeing the queen of the ocean, the holy Gunga, where the songs of the krauncha bird are heard, watching wave on wave rising on the sacred stream, that mighty warrior, Rama, said to Sumantra: "O Charioteer, let us lodge here. There, under the Ingudi tree,[1] laden with verdant leaves and blossom, let us rest. O Benevolent One, let us linger by the mighty river, whose auspicious waters are worshipped by the gods, the danavas, serpents, beasts and birds, and let us offer homage there."

Sumantra and Lakshmana answering "Be it so", stayed the chariot under the Ingudi tree.

Arriving there, Shri Rama and Lakshmana descended from the chariot and Sumantra, unyoking the horses, respectfully seated himself facing Rama, at the foot of the tree.

The king of that country was one, Guha, dear to Rama as his own life, by caste a ferryman, but possessing an army and designated "King of Watermen". Hearing that that Lion

[1] Ingudi tree—sacred Fig Tree.

among men, Shri Rama, had come to his territory, he together with his aged minister and relatives went forth to meet the prince. Shri Rama, seeing the chief of ferrymen, from a distance, went with Lakshmana to meet and welcome him. Perceiving Shri Rama to be in ascetic's garb, Guha, distressed, bowing before him, said: "O Prince, let this small kingdom be as Ayodhya to thee, please issue thy commands, I am at thy service. O Mighty-armed One, it is rare to receive a guest so deeply beloved!"

Guha then brought excellent dishes of delicious foods, together with the arghya and said: "We are thy servants and thou art our lord, accept this kingdom and rule it as thine own. Here are dishes of various kinds, desserts, liquids, spices, excellent beds on which to rest and provender for the horses, all at thy disposal."

Shri Rama answered: "O Guha, thou hast come to welcome me on foot out of affection, by this I am duly honoured, I am pleased with thee." Then taking him in his strong arms and embracing him, Shri Rama addressed him in cheerful accents, saying: "O Guha, through my good fortune I behold thee and thy friends in good health. Is all well among thy people and with thy possessions? O Friend, having renounced the acceptance of gifts, I am not able to partake of what thou hast offered me with love; know that having assumed the robe of kusha grass and the antelope skin, I live on fruit and roots; I am the protector of dharma and my father's servant. Being an ascetic, I may only accept a little grass for the horses and nothing beside—by this alone, I am fully welcomed. These horses of my father Dasaratha are dear to him, they having received oats, grass and pure water, I am honoured in full measure."

On this, Guha commanded his servants to provide drink and provender for the horses. Then Rama assuming a dress of bark performed his evening devotions, drinking the water brought by Shri Lakshmana. Then Lakshmana washed the feet of Rama and Sita who had laid themselves down beneath the Ingudi tree and seated himself respectfully near them. Guha with Sumantra seated near Shri Lakshmana who, armed with bow and arrow, carefully guarded Rama, spent the night in holy converse. Rama, the wise and illustrious son of King Dasaratha, deserving

every comfort and who now, lying on the ground, suffered adversity, passed the night undisturbed in deep sleep.

CHAPTER 51

The night is spent on the bank of the sacred river

GUHA addressed Shri Lakshmana who was humbly guarding his royal brother, and said: " O Friend, rest at ease on this soft bed prepared for thee. We are fitted for the forest life, but thou accustomed to ease, rest now, we will watch during the night and guard Shri Rama from harm, none is dearer to me on earth, I swear to thee in truth. To gratify Shri Rama, I will acquire fame, righteousness, wealth and pleasure.[1] I, with my bow and arrow, attended by my kindred, will watch over Shri Rama, now asleep with Sita. Wandering daily in the forest, nothing there is unknown to me, even if a powerful enemy attacked me in the forest, I could withstand him."

Lakshmana answered: " I have full faith in the power of thy protection, nor do I fear any, but how, forgetful of dharma, can I refrain from watching over Shri Rama? Beholding the chief heir of Dasaratha, sovereign of the earth, lying on the ground with the daughter of King Janaka, how should I dare to rest while he is sleeping? "

See Nishada[2]! That Mighty Prince, Shri Rama, whom none dared challenge, sleeps on a bed of straw. That Great One obtained by King Dasaratha by the merit of charity, austerity and devotion, having become an ascetic, his aged sire will not long survive and then will the earth become a widow. O Nishada, I deem the women wailing and lamenting at our departure have become silent and the royal palace also, but I fear the king, Kaushalya and my mother, will not outlast this night. Consoled by Shatrughna, my mother may endure a little while, but Queen Kaushalya, the mother of this hero,

[1] The four legitimate aims in life.
[2] The Nishada is the mountain tribe to which Guha belonged.

will surely yield up her life without Rama. Alas! Ayodhya, the repository of wealth and inhabited by those who love Rama, will perish through the distress caused by the king's death. How can the king live without beholding his beloved and virtuous eldest son? Queen Kaushalya also will perish, nor can my mother long survive Kaushalya's death. Alas! The whole structure of the king's purpose has fallen in ruins; desiring to appoint Rama as his regent, he will leave this world still cherishing this hope. He is fortunate who, attending the last hours of the king, performs his obsequies—and then ranges the city full of charming courts, palaces and temples with intersecting streets where lovely courtesans are seen; that city abounding in splendid chariots, horses and elephants, resounding with trumpets, possessing every amenity, filled with happy people, enriched by parks and gardens where conferences and joyous gatherings are held daily. When shall we, returning from the forest, walk in the royal city? May King Dasaratha continue to live, so that we may behold that excellent monarch on our return, with Shri Rama the Upholder of Truth."

Thus lamenting and afflicted, Shri Lakshmana, keeping watch over Rama, passed the night. Prince Lakshmana uttering words of truth and affection concerning his parents and elders, spoke thus to Guha who, grieving and disquieted, wept like an elephant in pain.

CHAPTER 52

Sumantra is ordered to return; Shri Rama, Sita and Lakshmana cross the holy river

The day having dawned, the broad-chested and illustrious Rama addressed the virtuous Prince Lakshmana. "Lo! the goddess Night has fled and the sun is about to rise. O listen how the blackbird is singing and the peacock's cry is heard in the forest. Let us cross the swift-flowing Bhagirathi, which runs towards the sea."

Shri Lakshmana, hearing Shri Rama's command, standing before his brother, called Guha and Sumantra. Guha divining Shri Rama's purpose, summoned his ministers and said to them: "Speedily bring a good boat, stout and strong, capable of taking Shri Rama across."

The minister according to Guha's instruction brought an excellent boat and said: "Sir, the boat is ready." Then Guha, with joined palms, approaching Shri Rama thus addressed him: "O Lord, thy boat is at hand, what further dost thou require of me? O Lion among men, O Prince, O Thou observer of great vows, the boat capable of crossing the river flowing towards the sea, is here, please enter it."

The glorious Prince Rama answered Guha saying: "Thou hast supplied me with all I could desire, now place the baggage on the boat." The princes donning their quivers, and bearing their bows, came to the place where the boat was waiting.

Then Sumantra approaching the righteous Rama with bowed head and joined palms, said: "What commands hast thou for me, O Lord?" Touching Sumantra with his right hand, Shri Rama replied: "O Virtuous Sumantra, now return to the king and serve him with vigilance, I no longer need thee. O Friend, leaving the chariot, I will enter the forest on foot." Sumantra receiving the order to return, imagined himself already separated from Rama and full of grief exclaimed: "O Lord, none in the kingdom desires thee to enter the forest with Sita and Lakshmana like a common man. When I behold thee, compassionate and guileless, facing great adversity, I regard as vain, compassion, simplicity, the brahmacharya vow and the study of the Veda! O Prince, dwelling in the forest with Sita and Lakshmana will bring thee renown equal to one who conquers the three worlds; but we, separated from thee, O Rama, are doomed and will fall under the sway of the sinful Kaikeyi."

The wise Sumantra, certain of Rama's departure, filled with distress, wept long and bitterly. At length, restraining his tears he purified himself with water, and was then addressed by Rama who spoke to him in gentle accents, saying: "Among the ministers of the house of Ikshwaku, none is so kind a friend. Wilt thou, therefore, act in such wise that the king be freed

from grief? The Lord of the earth is aged, his mind confused and he is tormented with desire, therefore I ask thee to minister unto him. Whatever the king commands, through affection for Queen Kaikeyi, do thou perform. Kings rule to fulfil their desires. O Sumantra, act in such a way that the king be not displeased, and that he may not sink under the weight of affliction. When thou dost approach him, who was hitherto a stranger to suffering, offer salutations on my behalf and say: 'Having renounced Ayodhya and entered the forest, Shri Rama, Lakshmana and Sita suffer no distress; fourteen years having passed, thou shalt soon see them return!'

"Deliver thus my message of affection again and again to the king, to my mother Kaushalya, the other queens and also Kaikeyi. Bowing to the feet of my mother Kaushalya, tell her that all is well with me and also with Sita and Lakshmana. Advise the king to send for Bharata speedily and when he is come, let him be installed as regent. Taking Prince Bharata in thine arms, appoint him king; thou shalt thus be freed from the grief caused by this separation. Thereafter, let Bharata, on my behalf be instructed to treat our mothers with equal affection and with the same honour as is due to the king. Let him look on Sumitra and my mother Kaushalya as his own mother Kaikeyi. Do thou say: 'If thou accept the kingdom to please the king, thy fame and happiness in both worlds are assured'."

Having spoken thus, Shri Rama desired to dismiss Sumantra from his presence bearing the message, but the minister, deeply distressed, addressed him, saying: "O Ramachandra, forgive me if I utter words lacking in reverence, urged by my devotion for thee, nor deem me to be a hypocrite. O Raghava, Ayodhya, by thy departure, resembles one afflicted by the loss of a son, how shall I return there without thee? Seeing the chariot without thee, the people will be filled with distress, the heart of the city will be riven in twain. Though thou hast travelled far, yet in the hearts of the citizens of Ayodhya thou art still present with them. Assuredly the people have neither partaken of food nor water in thine absence. At the time of thy departure, O Prince, thou wast acquainted with their grief, and didst witness their weeping and lamentation. On beholding the empty

chariot, their sorrow will be increased a thousandfold. On returning to Ayodhya, with what words shall I address thy mother? Shall I say 'I have left thy son at the home of thy brother, do not grieve.'? How can I utter such a falsehood, yet how can I relate the truth to her? Those noble steeds that have drawn the chariot bearing thee, Lakshmana and Sita, how shall they be driven without thee? O Sinless Prince, I cannot return to Ayodhya without thee, therefore let me remain with thee in the forest. If in spite of my prayer, thou still renouncest me, I will, with the chariot enter a blazing fire. O Prince, whatever beings seek to frustrate thy life of devotion in the forest, I will repel with my chariot. Through thee, I am enabled to drive the chariot, now be gracious enough to let me enter the forest with thee. Accept me, therefore, as thy protector and let me enter the forest, I ask thee with exceeding love. O Hero, should these excellent steeds serve thee in the forest, they will acquire a high spiritual state. O Prince, by whatever means I may serve thee in the forest, I would esteem it more than residence in heaven or in Ayodhya. Without thee, I am unable to return to the capital, as the sinful Indra was unable to enter Amaravati. It is my highest desire when thy period of exile shall be over to convey thee to the capital once more. O Rama, fourteen years with thee will pass like a moment, while without thee, they will seem like a thousand years. O Friend of those devoted to thee, I have resolved to stay in the forest with the son of my lord. How can'st thou abandon thy devoted friend, who only seeks to do his duty?"

Thus repeatedly besought by the minister Sumantra, Shri Rama answered him saying: "O Lover of thy Master, I know of thy devotion to me, but hear the reasons which prompt me to send thee hence to Ayodhya.

"Seeing thee return to the capital, my mother Kaikeyi, convinced I have entered the forest will be satisfied and will no longer reproach the king, charging him with falsehood and unrighteousness. I desire that my mother Kaikeyi should enjoy the prosperous kingdom governed by her son Bharata, therefore, to please me, return to the capital and deliver the message with which I have entrusted thee."

Thus Rama, offering explanation to Sumantra then spoke

words of reason and encouragement to Guha, saying: " O Guha, it is not proper for me to dwell in the forest in which my friends reside, therefore, constructing a hut of leaves and twigs elsewhere I will live as an ascetic. For the spiritual welfare of my father, I, Sita and Lakshmana, with matted hair following the ascetic discipline, will reside in the forest. Bring me, therefore, the milk of the Bhurja tree.[1] Guha obeyed the instruction of the prince, whereupon Rama poured the viscous liquid on his own head and also on the head of Lakshmana! Thus Shri Rama, that Lion among men, and his brother Lakshmana appeared as ascetics and in their robes of bark with matted locks looked charming. Taking the vow of brahmacharya, the two brothers addressed Guha saying: " O Guha, do not neglect thine armies, thy treasury, thy forces of defence and thy people. A kingdom is governed through diligence and exertion."

Taking leave of Guha, Shri Rama with Sita and Lakshmana went quickly towards the Ganges. Seeing the boat near the bank of the swiftly flowing river and desirous of crossing over it, Rama said to Lakshmana: " O Lion among men, hold the boat firm and aid the gentle Sita to board it, then you, too, enter it."

Acting on his brother's command, Shri Lakshmana first assisted the daughter of the King of Mithila and then boarded the boat himself. Then the resplendent Rama followed, being the last to enter and Guha ordered his servants to row them over the sacred river.

Occupying his seat in the boat, Prince Rama began to recite the Vedic mantra for the safe conduct of all. Performing the Achmana[2] ritual, he offered salutations to Shri Gunga and Lakshmana also made obeisance to the sacred stream. Shri Rama once more bade farewell to the charioteer, the army and Guha, and asked the helmsman to row to the other side. The boat moved swiftly to the sound of the oars.

Arriving in midstream, the delighted Sita, with joined palms, adored Shri Gunga, saying: " O Gunga, may this son of Dasaratha, obeying the commands of his father, be protected by thee. May he, passing fourteen years in the forest, return again with Lakshmana and myself. Then, O Devi, O Blessed

[1] Bhurja tree—a species of birch.
[2] Achmana—a purificatory ceremony.

Gunga, returning with them, I will worship thee. O Gunga, thou art the fulfiller of pious desires. O Thou Tripartite Goddess, reaching to the abode of Brahma, and appearing in the mortal realm as the consort of the ocean king, O Beautiful One, I bow down to thee and adore thee. When, returning safely from the forest, Shri Rama occupies the throne, then I, desiring to gratify thee, will give a hundred thousand cows, abundant grain and beautiful apparel to the brahmins in charity. Returning to Ayodhya, I will offer a sacrifice of a hundred jars of wine and rice to thee. I will worship all the gods dwelling on thy banks and all the sacred places such as Prayaga and Kashi. O Sinless One, grant that Rama and Lakshmana, free from sin, completing the term of their exile, return again to Ayodhya."

Thus worshipping the Gunga, the Promoter of delight, they reached the further bank. Then Rama, chief of men, leaving the boat on the southern shore, proceeded to the forest with Lakshmana and Janaki, and addressed Shri Lakshmana, saying: "O Son of Sumitra, do thou carefully protect Shri Sita in the lonely and also the frequented areas of the forest. We must guard her in this unknown and uninhabited place, therefore, O Lakshmana, do thou go before and let Sita follow thee, I will walk behind to safeguard you both, let us defend each other, O Prince. So far, Shri Sita has not made trial of her strength, but from to-day she must endure the hardships of a forest life. To-day, the daughter of King Janaka will enter the forest where no man dwells, nor are there fields or gardens there, but hard and arid ground with yawning chasms everywhere."

Shri Lakshmana, thus instructed, went ahead with Sita following him, Shri Rama coming after.

Meantime, Sumantra, on the further bank, followed Raghava with his eyes, and overcome with grief, wept bitterly. Shri Rama, resplendent as the earth's guardians, giver of boons, having crossed the river Gunga, came to the land of Batsya.

Thereafter, the two brothers hunted the deer and wild boar, and other beasts and growing hungry, fed on roots and berries, as ordained, resting at eventide beneath a tree.

CHAPTER 53

Determined to follow their destiny they enter upon exile

THE Delighter of the World, Shri Rama, sitting beneath a tree performed his evening devotion (Sandhya) and then addressed Shri Lakshmana thus: " O Brother, this is our first night in the forest without Sumantra, do not be dispirited. From now on at night but one of us shall sleep, since the protection of Shri Sita is our care. O Lakshmana, gathering leaves and grass, let us prepare a bed and lay ourselves down."

Shri Rama, accustomed to a sumptuous and princely couch, lay that night on the bare earth. Conversing with Shri Lakshmana, he said: " O Lakshmana, it may be that King Dasaratha slept fitfully this day, but Kaikeyi having realised her ambition, is surely satisfied. I fear that she, avid for the kingdom, will slay the king 'ere Bharata returns. The aged monarch is defenceless, a slave to Kaikeyi and subject to desire; bereft of me, how will the wretched king safeguard himself? Viewing the king's downfall and his subjection in matters of desire, it would seem that concupiscence is more powerful than wealth or virtue. O Brother, what foolish man, swayed by a woman, would abandon an obedient son like me? Bharata alone is fortunate, who, with his consort, having acquired Ayodhya, will enjoy the kingdom.

" Prince Bharata will become the ruler of the whole empire since the life of the king is drawing to its close and I have entered the forest. He who gives up righteousness and disregarding prosperity, seeks to gratify his desires, like King Dasaratha, falls a prey to sorrow. O Handsome Prince, I deem that Kaikeyi entered our house to destroy the king, to send me into exile and to install Bharata as ruler of the kingdom. O Brother, I fear that Kaikeyi, blinded by power, may persecute Kaushalya and Sumitra, they being our mothers. Do thou, lest Kaushalya and Sumitra suffer, go to Ayodhya, for my sake. I, with Sita, will enter the Dandaka forest. Go thou to Ayodhya and become the protector of the defenceless Queen Kaushalya. The evilly-disposed Kaikeyi, through enmity to us, may cause

injury to our mothers. O Lakshmana, assuredly in some previous birth, my mother has deprived other women of their sons and is reaping the fruit of that action in this life. Woe unto me, that I should have to abandon my mother who nurtured me with exceeding love and should now enjoy felicity. O Lakshmana, may no woman give birth to a son like me, who am the source of infinite distress to my mother. O Brother, a maina[1] taught by me, cried in the hearing of my mother, 'Bite the enemy's foot while you are in his mouth'.[2] O Lakshmana, my unfortunate mother is to-day sunk in an ocean of grief and I am not able to succour her. Better it were that she had had no son! Assuredly she is an object of compassion, mourning in my separation. Alas! what extremity of grief is hers to-day! O Lakshmana, should I give way to wrath, I were able to subdue the world not to speak of Ayodhya, but for the upholding of righteousness, I may not demonstrate my power. Should I do so, I should incur sin and endanger the life hereafter; never will I take the kingdom by force."

Thus lamenting in the lonely forest, Rama, abandoning restraint, passed the night in tears.

When, ceasing to lament, Lakshmana beheld Rama like an extinguished fire or a calm sea, he thus addressed him: "O Great Hero, deprived of thee, Ayodhya is without splendour, as the night, at the setting of the sun, but, O Rama, it is unworthy of thee to grieve, sapping the courage of Sita and myself. Like fish without water, we cannot live an instant without thee. O Great One, I do not desire to see my father, my brother Shatrughna or my mother Sumitra, nor even heaven itself."

Hearing the words of Lakshmana, full of good counsel, Shri Ramachandra arose and seated himself by Sita on the bed of leaves. Determined to follow his destiny, Shri Rama entered upon the period of exile. From that day, the two great princes of the house of Raghu dwelt in the lonely forest, serene and fearless like two lions dwelling on the summit of a mountain.

[1] Maina or Mina—a small percha, the size of a sparrow, able to repeat words.
[2] The meaning is Rama had a bird which was taught to speak. Seeing a parrot caught by a hawk, it cried out: "O, Parrot, bite the enemy's foot." (That is, before you are devoured.)

CHAPTER 54

They spend the night at Prayaga in the hermitage of the Sage Bharadwaja

As the sun rose in a cloudless sky, having passed the night under a banyan tree, they set out from thence and proceeded to where the Gunga and the Yamuna meet, flowing through the vast forest. The two illustrious brothers journeying onwards beheld beautiful vistas in the forest, hitherto unseen by them, and they, sometimes reclining at ease, delighted in the blossoming trees. The day being nearly over, Shri Rama said to the son of Sumitra: "O Lakshmana, look towards Prayaga,[1] smoke is rising like the fire-god's banner; undoubtedly, it is a sign that the hermitage of holy Bharadwaja is near. We have assuredly reached the junction of the Gunga and Yamuna, the sound of these mighty rivers clashing together is clearly heard. Wood-cutters have hewn the logs from mighty trees and many are cut down in the hermitage of the holy sage." Conversing thus, as the sun was setting, the two great archers reached the confluence of the Gunga and Yamuna, and the hermitage of Bharadwaja. Desiring to look upon the holy sage, they halted respectfully at some little distance from the place. Then Rama slowly and reverently entered the hermitage, beholding there the omniscient Sage Bharadwaja of mighty vows, the conqueror of time by sacred discipline. Surrounded by his disciples, offering oblations into the holy fire, they beheld the rishi, and Rama with Sita and Lakshmana paid obeisance to him. Rama said: "O Blessed and Mighty Sage, we are Rama and Lakshmana, the sons of King Dasaratha, and this, my wife, is the daughter of Videha's King, this fortunate one is following me to the lonely Tapovana. My royal sire has sent me into exile and the son of Sumitra, my younger brother, ever dear to me, taking the brahmacharya vow, has followed me. O Blessed Lord, fulfilling the behests of our father, we shall enter the sacred forest and, practising dharma, live on roots and berries."

[1] Prayaga—The confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna, a sacred spot.

The virtuous sage, Bharadwaja, hearing the words of Prince Rama, offering them madhuparka[1] together with the arghya, and water wherewith to wash their feet, thereafter gave them various roots and fruits. Then the holy sage prepared a resting place for them. The Maharishi Bharadwaja, seated amidst the deer and birds, thus honoured Rama, enquiring as to his welfare. Rama receiving the worship of the great rishi, reflected on the words spoken to him: " O Prince, I behold thee after a long time, I have heard that thou wast exiled without cause. Remain here at ease and in peace, at this sacred and pleasant place where the two great rivers meet."

Shri Rama, ever devoted to the good of all, answered: " O Lord, thy hermitage is close to the abodes of men and many will come hither to gaze on Sita and myself. I therefore do not deem it wise to linger here. O Blessed One, do thou inform me of a lonely place, where Sita, the daughter of Janaka, may live in happiness."

In gentle accents Shri Bharadwaja replied: " O Child, ten miles from here, there is a mountain, purified by the presence of many sages who dwell there, beautiful and pleasing to the sight, there do thou abide. Monkeys, bears and chimpanzees wander there freely. That mountain is Chittrakuta, delightful as Gandhamadana. Those beholding the peaks of Chittrakuta, obtain spiritual merit, their minds admit no sin and, living there, they win divine rewards. Many sages, performing austerities there for thousands of years, have entered heaven in their embodied state. O Rama, this lovely place is a fit residence for thee, I deem, if thou will not remain here with me until the period of thine exile be past." Thus Bharadwaja honoured Rama with Sita and Lakshmana offering them every mark of hospitality due to their royal state. So in the hermitage of the great sage at Prayaga, Rama spent the night in converse on ancient times. Relieved of weariness, Shri Rama with Lakshmana and Sita passed the night pleasantly in the sacred hermitage. When morning dawned, Shri Ramachandra, approaching the great sage made resplendent by virtue of austere practices, thus addressed him: " O Thou devoted to truth,

[1] Madhuparka—A traditional offering, a mixture of curds, butter, honey and the milk of coconut.

we have passed the night at ease in thy hermitage now grant us leave to depart to the place appointed by thee."

Shri Bharadwaja then made answer. " O Rama, set out for the mountain Chittrakuta abounding in honey, roots and fruit, worthy to be thy dwelling, covered with trees and the abode of heavenly beings; there, peacocks cry and mighty tuskers roam. Go then to that sacred place, which is pleasant and filled with fruit and flowers, and where elephants and deer wander through the woods. There, lingering with Sita by the springs and waterfalls, the mountain slopes and peaceful caves, thy mind will find delight. O Rama, do thou depart to dwell on that high and lovely mountain thronged with elephants and various beasts, where the tittibha[1] and the kokila[2] sing."

CHAPTER 55

They cross the Yamuna and travel on

SHRI RAMA and Lakshmana, the conquerors of their foes, having passed the night in Prayaga, offered obeisance to the sage and proceeded towards Chittrakuta. On their departure, Shri Bharadwaja gave them his blessing as a father blesses his son and addressing Rama, that hero of the region of truth, said:

" O Great One, proceeding west of the junction of the rivers, on the bank of the Yamuna, which flows into the swiftly-moving Gunga, thou wilt find a worn-out ferryboat. Do thou pass over the stream by means of a rod to which, at either end, an upturned pitcher is hung. On the opposite shore, thou wilt behold a mighty green-leaved fig-tree surrounded by many others. The leaves of this tree are of a dark green hue and it is frequented by siddhas. Reaching that place, do thou, with Janaki pray for the accomplishment of thy legitimate desires. Rest there awhile, then pass beyond it; reaching Nilvan at a mile's distance, there many sala, jamnu and badri[3] trees are seen,

[1] Tittibha—A bird Parra Jacana or Goensis.
[2] Kokila—The black or Indian cuckoo.
[3] Sala, jamnu and badri trees—for trees see separate glossary.

that is the way to Chittrakuta and often have I journeyed on that path. Beautiful it is and free from thorns and there is no danger there of a forest fire."

After pointing out the way to Shri Rama, the sage turned back to his own hermitage.

Offering salutations to the saint, Shri Rama, having taken his leave, said to Lakshmana: " O Lakshmana, surely we are fortunate in that the holy Rishi has treated us so graciously."

Conversing thus, the two princes proceeded onwards, Shri Sita walking before them, and came to the bank of the swiftly-flowing Yamuna. Then they began to consider how they should pass over it, and collecting some wood constructed a raft, tying together lengths of dried bamboo and filling the interstices with kusha grass. Then Lakshmana, spreading the branches of jambu and vettas trees, made Sita a comfortable seat. Shri Sita shyly holding the hand of her lord, Shri Rama placed his Beloved on the raft with her clothing and ornaments beside her. Thereafter placing the axes and the chest covered with deerskins, containing their weapons there, the two brothers began to sail. Arriving in mid-stream, Shri Sita, bowing low, prayed to the holy river saying: " O Devi, forgive us for passing over thee, grant that my lord may fulfil his vow without obstructions. When I return, to please thee I will offer a thousand cows in charity." Then with joined palms, she said: " May the Lord of the House of Ikshwaku return in peace to the capital."

Having crossed the rippling Yamuna, the swift daughter of the sun, they reached its southern bank; there abandoning the raft, they entered the woods and the river bank and came to the heavily shadowed fig tree.

Shri Sita said: " O Mighty Tree, I make obeisance to thee, may my lord fulfil his vow, so that I may again behold Shri Kaushalya and Queen Sumitra."

Then Sita circumambulated the tree with reverence and Rama beholding the lovely Sita praying for his welfare, said to Lakshmana: " Do thou go forward with Sita of whom no ill word has ever been uttered, who is ever obedient to me and is dearer than life itself. O Chief of Men, I, with my weapons will follow after. Whatever fruit or flower the daughter of

Janaka may desire in the forest, do thou gather for her, so that her mind may find delight."

Shri Sita, between the two princes, walked like a female elephant guarded by two tuskers; the daughter of Janaka, beholding many things, formerly unknown to her, questioned Rama concerning every tree, shrub and climbing plant. Seeing many beautiful trees covered with blossom, Shri Lakshmana brought the princess all she desired. Viewing the river and its sandy banks caressed by the waves, where swans and cranes called, Shri Sita was filled with happiness.

Having travelled some distance, the two valiant brothers slew many deer for food, then, with Sita, passed through the pleasant woods, ringing with the cries of peacocks and frequented by elephants and monkeys.

Perceiving a delightful and sheltered place which found favour with Sita, they lodged there free from fear.

CHAPTER 56

They reach the mountain Chittrakuta and build a hut

The night being past, Shri Rama, slowly waking, roused the sleeping Lakshmana and addressed him, saying: "O Lakshmana, how beautiful are the parrots, cuckoos, mainas and other birds which are heard here! O Parantapa,[1] this is the hour to pursue our journey, let us go hence, O Prince!"

Shri Lakshmana, renouncing sleep, shook off his drowsiness and rose refreshed. All of them rising and bathing in the river Yamuna, offered up their morning prayers. Then, taking the path through the palasa[2] forest, they proceeded towards Chittrakuta as directed by the holy sage.

Walking with Lakshmana, Rama now spoke to the lotus-eyed Sita, saying: "O Daughter of King Videha, see how the spring has dressed the palasa trees in sweet-scented blossom, these

[1] Parantapa—Oppressor of the enemy.
[2] Palasa or Palasha or Panasa—bread fruit.

crimson flowers glowing like fire and the branches decked with flowers as if adorned with garlands. How rich in bloom are the bilwa[1] trees untouched by man who is not able to approach them. Here we can easily gather food. See, O Lakshmana, hanging on the trees, the honeycombs at least a drona[2] in size, covered with bees. How charmingly the waterbird is singing and the peacock answering with its call, and look! the earth is half concealed with flowers. Here are the lofty peaks of Chittrakuta where countless birds sing and herds of elephants wander. Somewhere on Chittrakuta a level field must lie midst groves of trees, a pure and stainless place, where we will dwell."

The two brothers, in company with Sita, conversing thus, reached the pleasant and captivating mountain of Chittrakuta. Coming to that place, on which there were birds of many kinds, abounding in various roots and pleasant fruits and clear transparent pools, Rama said to Lakshmana: "O Gentle Brother, how pleasant is this hill covered with shady trees, creepers and fruits of many kinds, appearing delightful and where we may abide unmolested. Within the forest, many sages dwell, this place is meet to be our hermitage."

Thus resolving, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita came to the hermitage of the Sage Valmiki and, with reverence, offered obeisance to him. The virtuous sage, full of joy, paid homage to them, asking them to be seated saying: "You are most welcome!"

Shri Rama, presenting himself together with his brother and Sita, related the cause of his exile to the sage and then addressed Lakshmana, saying: "O Brother, bring strong wood and let us build a hut in this place. O Excellent Prince, here do I wish to dwell."

Shri Lakshmana thereupon brought many pieces of wood, hewn from the trees, and erected a hut thatched with leaves. When Shri Rama beheld that firm and pleasant hut furnished with a door, he said to the devoted Lakshmana: "O Lakshmana, bring venison with which we may worship the deity of the dwelling-place! Since we purpose to live here long, we should enter it with peaceful intention! O Son of Sumitra, having

[1] Bilwa—bel tree or wood apple.—Aegle Marmelas.
[2] Drona — a measure of corn approximately 92 pounds.

killed a black deer, bring it here speedily. Let us follow the scriptural ordinance in this matter."

Shri Lakshmana, having obeyed his brother's command, Rama said: "Now dress the meat and we will offer it as a sacrifice. Hasten, O Brother, this is an auspicious hour."

The illustrious son of Sumitra slew a black antelope and roasted it in the flames. When it was dressed and the blood drained from it, Lakshmana addressed Raghava, saying: "O Godlike One, I have prepared the flesh of the black deer, now offer up the sacrifice to propitiate the god."

The devout and resplendent Rama, skilled in silent prayer and sacrifice, having bathed, recited the holy texts, offering homage to the gods, then entered the hut, his heart filled with joy. Having adored Rudra and Vishnu for the purification of the dwelling, he read the Peace Chant and other propitiatory prayers. Repeating the japa[1] and bathing in the river, he offered oblations for the expiation of sins. He then erected altars in the eight directions for the worship of different gods and gratifying the deities presiding over the elements with offerings of flowers, garlands, fruits, cooked meats and the recitation of Vedic mantrans, he, together with Sita, entered the delightful hut, thatched with leaves, set up in a suitable place, sheltered from the wind.

Shri Rama, of subdued senses, dwelt happily in that habitation, built in the forest, the abode of beasts and birds, abounding in trees and flowers, where elephants wandered and the cries of wild beasts re-echoed.

Living on the pleasant mountain, Chittrakuta, by the banks of the river Malati, Rama forgot the capital and remembered his renunciation no more.

[1] Japa — silent prayer—usually the repetition of a sacred formula.

CHAPTER 57

Sumantra returns to the stricken city of Ayodhya

SEPARATED from Rama, Guha was filled with distress. Conversing long with the charioteer, he perceived Rama reach the southern shore, and turned homewards.

Sumantra hearing fully from the men of Shrangverpira of Rama's arrival at Prayaga, his meeting and residence with the Rishi Bharadwaja and his journey towards Chittrakuta, bade farewell to Guha and yoking his horses to the chariot, with a sorrowful heart, started for Ayodhya. Speedily passing through flower-laden forests and viewing the rivers, pools, villages and towns, he reached the stricken city of Ayodhya on the evening of the third day. Seeing the silent city, he reflected: "Has the city with its sovereign, men, elephants and horses been consumed by the fire of grief, caused by the separation from Rama?"

Pondering thus, in his swiftly borne chariot, Sumantra reached the gate of the inner city and entered it. There innumerable people rushed towards the chariot and surrounding it, cried: "Where is Shri Rama?" "Where is Shri Rama?" and Sumantra answered: "Having reached the banks of the Gunga, the virtuous Rama ordered me to return, therefore, I have come." Then the people, finding Rama had crossed the sacred river, their eyes filled with tears, sighing heavily, cried: "O Rama, O Rama!" and all exclaimed with one voice, "Alas! We are deprived of the sight of Rama, we are destroyed! We shall no more behold Rama, the distributor of gifts and performer of sacrifices, who sat in our assemblies and who resembled the beautifully adorned Meru mountain! Alas! Where is Shri Rama, our protector, acquainted with the need of each and the happiness of all!"

Then Sumantra, proceeding further, heard on every side, through the lattices of the houses the wailing of women mourning for Rama and hearing their lamentations on the royal highway, the charioteer, covering his face, passed quickly on towards the palace of the king.

Descending with all speed from his chariot, he passed beyond the seven gates and entered the royal residence. Seeing Sumantra return alone, the women, seated at the balconies and windows of the palace, seven-stories high, languishing in Rama's separation, broke into loud lamentations. Exchanging glances, their eyes streaming with tears, in broken accents they gave expression to their grief. He heard, too, the feeble wailing of the queens of King Dasaratha, saying: " What will Sumantra, who went forth with Rama and has returned alone, say to the stricken Queen Kaushalya? Surely the human soul suffers pain and anxiety more readily than joy, since Queen Kaushalya still lives separated from Rama."

Hearing the words of the queens and weighed down with sorrow, Sumantra entered the residence of the king and passing through the eighth door beheld in the white chamber, the wretched king, disconsolate and wasted with grief on account of his son. Approaching the king seated there, Sumantra making obeisance to him delivered the message entrusted to him by Shri Rama.

The king heard it in silence, his mind agitated with pain and grief and fell unconscious to the earth. The queens, seeing the king fallen in a swoon, lifted him in their arms and covered him with tears. Kaushalya and Sumitra raising the fallen monarch from the ground addressed him, saying: " O Thou Fortunate One, why dost thou not answer the messenger of Rama who has accomplished his arduous task? O King, having exiled Rama, why art thou now full of shame? Arise, there is no cause for this distress. O Lord, Queen Kaikeyi is not here, in fear of whom thou dost not dare address Sumantra. Speak without fear."

Thus exhorting the king, Queen Kaushalya fell insensible, her throat choked on account of her grief.

The ladies of the court and the other queens, perceiving Kaushalya lying on the ground lamenting, began to weep aloud. Then all the people of Ayodhya, old and young, hearing the wailing from the inner apartments of the palace, broke into lamentation, as on the day when Rama had left the city.

CHAPTER 58

He delivers Shri Rama's message to the king

THE king, recovering consciousness after a while, summoned the royal charioteer and turned his gaze upon him. Sumantra reverently approached the aged monarch who was grieving and restless, and sighing heavily like a newly-captured elephant. Then the afflicted sovereign spoke to Sumantra who was most miserable, his body covered with dust, his eyes suffused with tears, and said: "O Charioteer, that virtuous one, worthy of every comfort and happiness will now be seeking refuge under a tree. O! What will be his food? How will Rama, the son of King Dasaratha, who merits no suffering, who is worthy of resting on a royal couch, sleep as one orphaned, on the bare earth? How can that prince, formerly accompanied by soldiers and elephants, and whose chariot was drawn by matchless steeds, now sleep in the lonely forest? How will Rama and Sita be able to dwell in the forest abounding with pythons and other wild beasts? O Sumantra, how can the tender and sorrow-stricken Sita with the two princes, abandoning the chariot, walk barefooted in the forest? O Charioteer, thou art fortunate in that thou hast seen the two princes wandering in the forest like the Ashwini Kumaras on the mountain Mandara. O Sumantra, when they entered the forest, what did Rama say? What did Lakshmana say? What did Sita say? O Charioteer, tell me fully of Rama's dwelling, his sleeping and his eating, thus shall I live a little longer, like King Yayati of old, on hearing the words of the sadhus."

Thus questioned by his royal master, Sumantra, his throat choked, his speech broken by sobs, replied: "O Great King, Shri Rama, the Upholder of righteousness, reverently joining his palms and bowing his head, said: 'On my command, offer salutations again and again to the most praiseworthy sovereign, renowned far and wide in the world as highly virtuous, and to all the men and women of the inner apartment, carry tidings of my welfare with salutations befitting their rank. Convey the news of my welfare to my mother Kaushalya, with my

deepest respect and admonish her not to neglect her duty. Let her practise dharma and tend the sacrificial pavilion. Say to her: 'O Goddess, honour the king, my father, as thou wouldst a God. Abandoning family pride and royal prerogative, serve my other mothers attentively. Kaikeyi is the king's favourite, do thou attend to her as to the king himself.'"

"O King, Shri Rama has instructed Prince Bharata thus: 'Let it be known to the prince, that I am well and instruct him to treat all his mothers with justice. Tell the illustrious Prince Bharata that, though regent, he must continue in obedience to his royal father. The king is far advanced in years, let not Prince Bharata proclaim himself king. Let him obey the king and act as co-adjutor.'" "Shri Rama charged me with tears, saying: 'Let Bharata look upon my beloved mother as his own.' The mighty armed and highly illustrious Rama of lotus eyes addressing me thus, wept aloud.

"Then Shri Lakshmana growing wrath and sighing heavily, said: 'What fault has this noble prince committed to be exiled? Assuredly the king has agreed to the foolish desire of Queen Kaikeyi, granting her boons without considering if they were proper or improper, through which we are all involved in misery. If Rama has suffered exile to satisfy the stupidity of Queen Kaikeyi, then assuredly it is an evil act. Even if the gods decreed the exile of Rama, I see no reason for it. Acting with imperfect understanding the king regardless of consequences has banished Rama which will surely cause him untold suffering. I see no parental affection in the king; to me Shri Ramachandra is brother, master, relative and father. The darling of the whole world, Shri Ramachandra, devoted to the good of all, has been banished, how can the people approve this act? Having, in opposition to the will of the people, exiled Shri Ramachandra, who is virtuous and beloved, how can he claim to be a king?

"The sagacious Janaki, O King, stood mute, her eyes fixed and vacant, like one possessed by a spirit. That illustrious daughter of Janaka, unacquainted with suffering, wept with grief and was unable to speak. Seeing the countenance of her lord wet with tears, her mouth became parched, and gazing at me, she wept bitterly. Thus Shri Rama, his face drawn with

grief, supported by Lakshmana, addressed me, seated in the royal chariot, while the ascetic Sita fixed her gaze on me in silence."

CHAPTER 59

The king bewailing the absence of Rama is drowning in a sea of sorrow

SUMANTRA said: " O King, when Shri Rama entered the forest, I returned and the weary horses halting, stood still, showing signs of distress. Offering obeisance to the two princes, I mounted the chariot and restraining my grief, went forward, remaining a few days with Guha, in the hope that Shri Rama might call me again and take me with him.

" O King, turning homewards, I beheld the very trees filled with distress, their tender shoots, buds and flowers being withered! The water in the pools and rivers was slowly ebbing away, the leaves in the woods were falling and the beasts were motionless, the restless elephants no longer wandered here and there. Afflicted by Rama's separation, the forest had become silent. O King, the waters in the ponds had grown turbid and the lotuses had submerged themselves, being unable to bear the severance from Rama. The fishes and water fowl had deserted their accustomed haunts and the aquatic plants and those that grew on land no longer gave forth their fragrant scents, while their fruits were devoid of taste. Gardens were bereft of beauty and birds sat motionless in the woods.

" Entering Ayodhya, none appeared to be happy and the citizens beholding the royal chariot without Rama were perpetually sighing. O Lord, seeing, from a distance, the chariot returning without Rama, all were plunged in grief. The women of the city, from their windows, balconies and roofs, seeing the chariot without Rama, broke into lamentation. With tears falling from their unpainted eyes, full of distress, they withdrew their gaze from all. To-day, I am unable to distinguish friend or foe

owing to grief. All men together with elephants and horses, join in the suffering and mourning, all are afflicted in Rama's separation! The city of Ayodhya, neglected and wretched, resembles Queen Kaushalya bereft of her son!"

Hearing these words, the king became agitated and in trembling accents addressed the charioteer: "O Sumantra, deeply penitent am I, that without deliberating with my able counsellors and elders, I granted the boons to the evil-minded Kaikeyi, under the sway of Manthara. This unpremeditated act was performed by me, inspired by my desire for Kaikeyi, without consultation with my friends and ministers. O Sumantra, this great calamity is the result of fate and will destroy the House of Ikshwaku. O Charioteer! If I have ever done any good to thee, then take me to Shri Ramachandra soon; my life is fast ebbing from my body, or do thou go to the forest and cause Rama to return, if he be still obedient to me. If that Mighty One be gone far from here, then take me in the chariot and drive there speedily; I desire to look on him but once more. Where is Rama, the elder brother of Lakshmana, whose teeth resemble the water lilies and who is a mighty warrior? If I am to live, I must see that virtuous one. If I do not behold Rama with reddened eyes, wearing beautiful earrings, set with jewels, I shall assuredly perish. O! What can exceed my pain, that, at the moment of death, I am unable to see Rama, the hero of the House of Ikshwaku? O Rama, O Lakshmana, O Patient Sita, you do not know that I am dying in bitter anguish."

The king, his mind drowned in the sea of sorrow, cried: "O Kaushalya, that ocean of misery caused by Rama's separation is fathomless, severance from Sita are its shores, deep sighs are the whirlpools rendered turbid by my tears, the stretching of the arms are its restless motion, lamentations are the sound of its thunder, dishevelled hair are the weeds, the words of Manthara are the crocodiles and Kaikeyi is the fire in its depths, the unscaleable cliffs are the boons which sent Rama to the forest. Without Rama, I am sinking in this bottomless sea, living, I am unable to cross over it. I desire to see Rama and Lakshmana this day, but alas! I am unable to obtain my desire, as a result of some great sin formerly committed by me."

Thus complaining, the king fell senseless on the couch. The

monarch, bewailing the absence of Rama, swooned away. Hearing the king's words, the mother of Rama, Queen Kaushalya, was seized with fear.

CHAPTER 60

The charioteer attempts to console Queen Kaushalya

QUEEN KAUSHALYA, lying trembling on the ground like one dead or possessed by an evil spirit, now said to the charioteer: "O Sumantra, take me to the place where Rama, Lakshmana and Janaki dwell! Life without them, even for a moment, is vain. Speedily return there in thy chariot, either I must follow them or enter the region of death."

Shri Sumantra, weeping and distressed, respectfully sought to console the Queen, saying: "O Lady, abandon disquiet, infatuation and anxiety born of grief! Shri Rama will live happily in the forest! Prince Lakshmana, self-subdued, serving Rama and living in accordance with virtue will fashion for himself an auspicious future. In the solitary forest, Shri Sita, her mind wholly centered on Rama in devotion, will live without fear, as in her own home. I see no lack of courage in Princess Sita, it would appear that she was born to reside in a strange land. As in former days, she enjoyed the parks and gardens, so does she now enjoy the uninhabited forest. Sita, whose countenance resembles the full moon, her mind absorbed in Rama, depending on him, sports in the forest; with her heart and mind centred on him, she would hold this great capital no better than a wilderness without Rama. Walking in the forest, seeing the villages, rivers, towns and various kinds of trees, she enquires of Rama concerning their history and origin. To her, the forest is a pleasure garden in the neighbourhood of Ayodhya. This I remember of Sita, but what she said of Kaikeyi now slips my mind."

Sumantra, carefully withholding the reference to Kaikeyi which had escaped from him through inadvertence and in order

to propitiate Queen Kaushalya, addressed her further, saying: " The lustre of the face of Janaki is not marred by the fatigue of the journey or the winds or through fear of dangerous beasts or through the heat of the sun. The countenance of the Princess, resembling the full moon is not impaired by residence in the forest. Her feet, no longer painted with vermilion, appear as fresh as lotuses.

The princess ever exceedingly devoted to Rama, has not put off her ornaments, but with her tinkling anklets trips happily along, causing the very swans to envy her. Depending on the power of Shri Rama, she suffers no fear at the sight of a lion or tiger in the forest. O Lady, there is no cause for grief for these three or for the king or thyself. The self-imposed exile of Shri Rama, in obedience to his father's command, will remain a subject for veneration to the whole world, as long as the sun and moon abide. Having banished sorrow, Shri Rama pursuing the path trodden by the sages, living on fruits and berries, fulfils the behest of his sire."

Though consoled by the charioteer, Queen Kaushalya, torn with grief, in the separation from her son, cried out: " O My Darling, O My Son, O Rama," and continued to weep.

CHAPTER 61

Queen Kaushalya reproaches the king

THE virtuous Rama, the upholder of dharma, having departed, Queen Kaushalya weeping bitterly, addressed her royal consort: " O King, Thy fair name is known throughout the three worlds; thou art esteemed compassionate, charitable and of gentle speech. Yet, O Great One, tell me, how will thy two sons, brought up in ease together with Sita, be able to endure the forest life? How will the young and tender Sita, worthy of happiness, endure heat and cold? How will that large-eyed princess, who lived on dishes prepared by skilful cooks, sustain life on the wild lentils of the forest? How will she, accustomed

to the sweet strains of music, be able to bear the roaring of man-eating lions? How will the two mighty princes, whose arms resemble the rainbow,[1] sleep on the ground, pillowing their heads on their arms. O When will I again behold the lotus face of Rama, framed in beautiful locks, whose eyes are like the water-lily and whose breath is fragrant as the nymphoea? Surely my heart must be as hard as a diamond that it does not break into a thousand pieces, bereft of Rama. O King, in banishing thy children, thou hast been merciless. Worthy of every comfort, they are now wandering aimlessly in the forest. Should Rama return, after fourteen years, will Prince Bharata restore the kingdom and the treasure to him? If those inviting the pious and learned brahmins to the funeral sacrifice, first serve their poor and deserving relations and subsequently the brahmins these will not accept the food of that sacrifice, renouncing it like wine. The learned brahmins regard it as a mark of disrespect to be served even with that in which other brahmins have already participated, which is like a bull shorn of its horns, of lesser worth. O Master of thy People, will not Rama even thus disdain the kingdom enjoyed by his younger and undeserving brother? A lion will not eat the food killed by another, neither will Rama accept that which has already been enjoyed by others. As the libations, butter, kusha grass and pillars employed in the sacrifice, are not used again, so will Rama not accept a kingdom which resembles a sacrifice without soma.[2]

Shri Rama will never suffer this indignity, as a lion will not suffer the twisting of its tail. Do not all fear Rama as he appears on the battlefield? He, himself, is righteous, indicating the path of virtue to others, never will he seize the kingdom by force! Is not the mighty-armed Rama with his golden shafts, able to destroy all living beings and dry up the sea? Yet to-day, that Rama, powerful as a lion, is rendered impotent at the king's command, as the spawn of fishes is devoured by their parents? O King, hadst thou regarded the scriptures and the eternal laws, observed and inculcated by the learned sages, thy virtuous son had not been exiled by thee. O Lord, the first support of a woman is her husband, the second is her son, the third her

[1] Probably in their span.
[2] Soma—a sacred libation offered to the gods.

relatives, but a fourth she has not! Thou hast ceased to regard me as thine, thou hast banished my son Rama, and I may not follow him and leave thee desolate. O Lord, thou hast destroyed me utterly! O King, thou hast brought disaster on thy counsellors, the whole kingdom, the ministers and thyself, and I with my son and all the citizens of Ayodhya are utterly ruined."

Hearing the bitter reproaches of his consort, the king, reflecting on the cause of this calamity, overwhelmed with grief, fell senseless, drowned in the sea of sorrow.

CHAPTER 62

The king is overcome with grief

FILLED with anguish on hearing the harsh words of Queen Kaushalya, the king began to reflect on what could be done. Regaining consciousness, he sighed heavily and began to ponder within himself. He then remembered how, formerly, he had slain a young ascetic inadvertently by a sound-directed arrow, in the forest.

The monarch was now subject to a dual cause of grief, the recollection of his former evil deed and his banishment of Rama. Thus afflicted, with bowed head, the king addressed the queen in faltering tones: "O Kaushalya, ever compassionate to thine enemies, I entreat thee, with joined palms, not to look on me with hostility. O Lady, to the wife, the husband is a deity be he virtuous or worthless, this is the eternal law. I know thee to be wise and acquainted with what is proper and improper, it is not meet that thou shouldst utter these wounding words."

Hearing this plaintive speech, tears welled from the eyes of the queen like falling rain and taking his hands in hers, she addressed the king, saying: "O Lord, do not grieve, be at peace, see, I lay my head at thy feet, do not entreat me, it is as death to me! I have spoken what ought not to be uttered, pardon my transgression! That woman is not nobly bred, who expects

her lord to solicit her with humble words. O Sire, I am acquainted with a woman's duty and I know thee to be a lover of virtue. What I have said was uttered involuntarily through distress on account of my son. Grief destroys patience, grief destroys the understanding, there is nothing more destructive than grief! The blow of an unknown enemy may be endured but the distress arising from grief is not easily borne, even with resignation. This is only the fifth night since the exile of Rama but to me they are as five years. Sorrow has driven away every joy from my breast and because of Rama my pain increases, agitating my heart as the waters of a swiftly flowing river disturb the ocean."

While the queen was yet speaking, the sun declined and the night fell. Consoled by the words of Queen Kaushalya, the king, wearied with grief, sank into slumber.

CHAPTER 63

He recalls a former evil deed which is the cause of his present distress

A FULL hour having passed, the king awoke and was overcome with distress. He began to ponder deeply, but his mind was clouded with grief and though equal to Indra, death threatened to seize him as Rahu[1] seizes the sun.

The sixth night after Rama's exile, the king again remembered his former evil deed and agitated by the recollection of his sin, he addressed the Queen Kaushalya: "O Kalyani, O Auspicious One, whatever man does, be it good or evil, he gathers the fruit thereof. He is deemed ignorant who does not consider the merit or demerit of his actions before performing them. O Queen, he, who, enjoying the red flowers of the palasa tree, cuts down the adjoining mango tree and yet desires to partake of mangoes, will not realize his expectation when the palaśa bears fruit. He,

[1] Rahu—a mythical demon said to cause the eclipse of sun or moon.

who, heedless of the consequences, enters into action, will in the end repent like the man who waters the palasa tree.

"O Lady, I have cut down the mango tree and watered the palasa tree, now, when the fruit is ripe, I too, having banished Rama, repent bitterly. O Kaushalya, in order to be esteemed as an archer, in my youth, I directed my arrows by sound alone, and a grievous deed was committed by me. I am the cause of this present distress. O Queen, as a child swallows poison in ignorance, so have I destroyed my happiness by this deed formerly committed in ignorance. As one beguiled by the beauty of the palasa flower, waters it in expectation of the sweet fruit (of the mango) so did I cultivate the fruit I now reap, by shooting at a sound. O Lady, in those days we were not united in marriage and I was heir-apparent.

"At that time, the rainy season being near, the increase of desire having come, the sun drying up the earth, scorching the world with its rays, entered the southern path. Then the heat subsided and refreshing clouds covered the sky, delighting the peacocks, the frogs and the swallows. The birds drenched with the rain, passed the night in distress, tossed to and fro on the trees by the humid winds. The limpid water in the streams dark and turgid from deposits of the mountain soil, flowed onwards sluggishly.

"In that delightful season, taking my bow and arrows in my chariot, I came to the bank of the river Sarayu, desiring to hunt. Taking my stand at a ford, where buffaloes, elephants and tigers came at night to drink, I heard the sound as of a pitcher being filled with water in the darkness. Seeing nought and deeming it to be the sound of an elephant, I took from my quiver an arrow dipped in the poison of a snake and discharged it whence the sound came. Having discharged the keen and poisoned shaft, I heard the voice of a youth crying out, and he, pierced in the side, fell exclaiming 'Who has shot an ascetic who has no enemy in the whole world? Desirous of drawing water, I came here in the dead of night. What harm had I done to him who has smitten me? Why should I, who live on fruits and roots in the forest, and have injured none by word or deed, be slain by weapons? What gain is there in destroying one wearing bark and deerskin? To whom have I done an injury? Such an act is unlawful, as one who does not respect

the couch of his Guru is considered an abandoned person, so he who has wrongfully smitten me, cannot be a virtuous man. I do not grieve for the loss of my own life, but for what will befall my parents, when I die! To what condition will they be brought on my death, that aged pair so long supported by me? My mother, my father and I have been killed by a single arrow! By what foolish man have we all been slain?'

"O Kaushalya, I, ever desirous of acquiring virtue and eschewing what was evil, hearing this sad complaint, became exceedingly distressed and the bow fell from my hands. The lament of the sage caused me the deepest affliction and overwhelmed with grief I advanced to where he lay, wounded by my arrow. There I beheld him lying on the ground, his hair dishevelled, his body besmeared with blood and dust, the water flowing from his loshta[1] which lay at some distance from him. Seeing me standing there dismayed, he fixed me with his gaze as if he would consume me, and said: 'O King, what harm have I, a dweller in the forest, done to thee, that thou hast wounded me while fetching water from the river for my aged parents? Thou hast inflicted a mortal wound by thine arrow and have in this wise slain my mother and father also, who weak, aged and blind and the victims of exceeding thirst, await my return. Afflicted with thirst, they are watching for my return. Alas! what fruit have I earned by the practice of penance and the hearing of the Veda and Puranas[2] since my father does not know that I am lying mortally wounded here? Yet if he knew, what could he do, since he is blind and a cripple? As a tree cut down cannot support another, so my parents blind and crippled cannot assist me. O King, go speedily to my father and inform him of my plight. I fear lest he curse thee and consume thee as a fire burns up wood! O King, the path beheld by thee leads to my parents' hut. Do thou go there and propitiate them, O King, that they may not wax wrath and curse thee. O King, free my side from this shaft; this arrow penetrating my body resembles a river that washes away the long and sandy bank.'

[1] Loshta—a small vessel of coconut or metal used for begging or ceremonial purposes.

[2] Puranas—Legends, or ancient epic poems.

" O Lady, I reflected that as long as the arrow remained fixed he would not die, though suffering great pain, but should I extract it, he would certainly perish. The son of the muni, seeing me afflicted and reading my thoughts addressed me in great agony and said: ' O King, though in anguish and confused, my body quivering with pain and about to die, yet I am able to control my distress and am at peace. Dismiss thy fears, O King, though thy sin is grievous, thou hast not slain a brahmin.[1] O King, I am born of a shudra mother and a vaishya father.'

"As he was speaking, his eyes rolling, his face blanched, struggling and quivering on the earth, I withdrew the arrow and he, looking up in agony, yielded up his breath.

" O Queen, deeply afflicted, I beheld that treasury of truth, lamenting, his body bathed in sweat, in the act of giving up his life."

CHAPTER 64

Overborne by grief the king yields up his life

THE king, grieving over the separation from his son, continued to describe the infamous deed, the slaying of the young ascetic, to the queen and said :—

" O Kaushalya, having unwittingly committed this impious deed, I, deeply distressed, reflected what could now be done and decided to seek out the parents and propitiate them. Taking the pitcher, filled with water, I bore it to the ascetic's hermitage and there beheld his mother and father, aged and feeble, seated together, like two birds bereft of their wings. Motionless, deprived by me of their support, they sat, conversing of their son and awaiting the water. My mind was clouded with grief and I was smitten with fear, but seeing the aged pair, my anguish was increased a thousandfold.

" Hearing the sound of my steps, the father spoke: ' O My

[1] A deadly sin, the five mortal sins being: the murder of a brahmin, the drinking of intoxicating liquor, theft, adultery with the wife of the spiritual preceptor or friendship with those guilty of the above.

Son, why hast thou delayed so long? Give me water speedily, O Child, why hast thou been diverting thyself in the water? Come quickly into the hermitage, thy mother is exceedingly anxious. O My Son, if aught thy mother has done has displeased thee, it behoves thee to forget it. Thou art our only support who are blind and crippled; thou art our very eyes, our lives are dependent on thee, why dost thou not speak to us?'

"Beholding the muni, and as one sorely dismayed, I uttered inarticulate words, then by force of will, controlling my speech, I related to him the whole misfortune. Slowly, I narrated to the sage the distressing fate that had befallen his son and said: 'O Mahatma, I am not thy son, my name is Dasaratha and I am a kshatriya. A sinful act has been committed by me of which I now repent. O Lord, armed with bow and arrow I came to the bank of the Sarayu to hunt the elephant, tiger or lion, that might come there to drink. Hearing the sound of a pitcher being filled with water and supposing it to be an elephant, I discharged an arrow and coming to the bank of the river beheld an ascetic lying on the ground pierced to the heart by my weapon. O Lord, having mistaken thy son, who had gone to seek water, for an elephant, I slew him by an arrow discharged on hearing that sound. On his entreaty I extracted the arrow from his heart causing him pain and he left this life lamenting for his blind parents. Thy son was suddenly and unknowingly slain by me without design; what was to happen, has been accomplished. Thou art a sage, now do what thou considerest proper.'

"Hearing the tale of my evil deed from my own lips, the sage refrained from pronouncing a curse on me. His eyes suffused with tears and his heart distressed, he addressed me who supplicated him with joined palms, saying: 'O King, if thou thyself had'st not confessed this evil deed to me, thy head had instantly split into a thousand pieces by my curse. O King, the killing of one dwelling in the forest by a kshatriya causes him to lose his status, even if he be Indra. If anyone knowingly attacks a sage or spiritual preceptor with a weapon, his head is severed into seven pieces. Thou livest still, since the deed was done by thee without design, else hadst thou and the whole House of Raghu perished.'

" O Kaushalya, the sage said: ' Take me to the place where the body of my son is lying, I wish to acquaint myself with his final state. Alas! Under the decree of destiny he is lying lifeless on the earth, his body besmeared with blood, stripped of the deerskin formerly worn by him.'

" O Kaushalya, taking the deeply distressed sage and his wife to that place, they, with their fingers touched the lifeless body of their son. Approaching the place, they embraced the dead body of their child, the father crying: ' O Child, thou art to-day not bidding us welcome, nor dost thou speak to me. Why art thou lying on the earth, art thou displeased? O My Son, if thou art angry with me, regard thy virtuous mother. Why dost thou not embrace me and speak tender words to me? Now that half the night has gone, who will read the Scriptures and Puranas in gentle accents to me? O My Son, who will perform our morning ablutions and after offering up his morning devotions, serve and console us? Helpless and destitute, who will gather roots, berries and fruits for me in the forest, and feed me, like a beloved guest? O My Son, how shall I nourish and support thy mother, blind, ascetic and devoted to her son? O My Child, stay, stay, do not yet enter the abode of Yama. To-morrow thy mother and I will accompany thee. Without thee we are distressed, helpless and bereft of support, we will accompany thee to the abode of Yama. Beholding the Lord of Death, we shall say to him, "Forgive our transgressions of the past which have caused us to be separated from our son and let him yet be our support. Grant us this blessing, O Lord of Death, and make us free from fear. Thou art just and the renowned protector of thy realm? O My Son, thou art innocent and hast been slain by a sinful man, therefore, by the power of truth, enter thou the abode of heroes. Go, my son to that high state attained by those who follow truth and suffer death at the hands of their foes, without retreating. Go to that high region attained by Sagara,[1] Shivya,[2] Dilipa,[3] Janamejaya,[4] Nahusha[5] and

[1] Sagara— the king whose story has been told in a previous chapter.
[2] Shivya or Sivi—King of Usinara whose charity and devotion are extolled in the Mahabharata.
[3] Dilipa— Father of Bhagiratha who brought the Ganges to earth.
[4] Janamejaya— One of the great and virtuous kings of ancient days.
[5] Nahusha— Father of King Yayati. q.v.

Dhundhumara.[1] That state attained by those versed in the Veda and practising austerity, be thine. That state, O My Son, of those who attend the sacred fire, of those highly generous persons who make gifts of land in charity, may that state acquired by those who give thousands of cows in charity and serve their Guru single mindedly, or those courting death by fire in meditation, be thine. None born of thy family has ever descended to a lower state but he who has slain our son shall end in misery ".'

" Thus for a long time wailing in distress, the aged parents began to offer ceremonial water for their dead son. The son of that sage by virtue of his meritorious deeds ascending to heaven in a celestial form, in the company of Indra addressed his parents with consoling words, saying: 'By virtue of my services to you, I have obtained this state, you, too, will soon join me here.' Thereafter, that self-controlled ascetic ascended to heaven in an aerial chariot. O Lady, that great sage with his wife performing the water ritual, said to me standing near with joined palms: 'O King, now put an end to my life also, I shall feel no grief in dying. This was my only son and by slaying him thou hast rendered me childless. As he was slain by thee, I pronounce a curse on thee. Mayest thou suffer the the same grief that thou hast caused to me, through separation from thy son, ending in thy death. O King, having slain the sage unknowingly, the guilt of killing a brahmin will not be thine. As the dispenser of charity receives the merit of those gifts, so wilt thou suffer in the degree of the suffering thou hast caused me, putting an end to thy life.'

" O Queen, having cursed me, they lamented for some time and then gathering wood, kindled a fire, and entering it, departed this life. O Lady, to-day recalling that evil deed, committed thoughtlessly in my youth, by discharging the arrow by sound, the fruit of my action has overtaken me, as illness follows the partaking of unwholesome food. O Noble Lady, the time of the fulfilment of the sage's curse has come."

Having said this, the king weeping and overcome with fear on the approach of death, spoke again: " O Kaushalya, I am

[1] Dhundhumara—Slayer of the demon Dhundhu, a title of the King Kuvalayaswa.

about to yield up my life through grief for my son, I am unable to see thee, do thou draw near and touch me. Those about to enter the abode of death distinguish nought. If Rama could but touch me for an instant, or receive my wealth and the regency, I might yet live. O Auspicious Lady, I have not dealt justly with Rama, but what he has done to me is right. What thoughtful man would abandon even a sinful son? But what son, sent into exile will not think ill of his father? O Kaushalya, I no longer behold thee, my memory is also fading. O Queen, the messengers of death call on me to depart; what affliction is greater than this, that at the hour of death I do not behold the virtuous Rama, the hero of truth? The grief caused by the absence of my son, who never opposed my wishes, dries up my life as heat dries up water. They are not men, they are gods, who will look on that lovely countenance of lotus eyes and charming features after fourteen years! Blessed are those who will behold the face of Rama resembling the full moon, returning to Ayodhya. Fortunate are they who will behold Rama in the capital like the planet Shukra,[1] completing its course in the heavens. O Kaushalya, my heart is breaking, I have lost the sense of touch, taste and sound. When the mind expires, the senses are extinguished as the flame of a lamp subsides when the oil is consumed. O Grief, thou art destroying me and carrying away my life as a river bears away the banks by its force! O Prince, O Mighty Hero, O Sole Remover of my pain, O Darling of Thy Sire, O My Master, My Son, where art thou? O Kaushalya, O Virtuous Sumitra, I depart! O My Cruel Enemy Kaikeyi, destroyer of my family's felicity."

Thus lamenting, the king died in the presence of Rama's mother and the Queen Sumitra.

Overborne by the grief caused by the exile of his son, that generous and mighty king, at midnight, yielded up his life.

[1] Shukra—The planet Venus.

CHAPTER 65

The palace is filled with the sound of distress

THE night having passed, at dawn, according to custom, the bards arrived at the palace of the king, the traditional singers, those versed in rhetoric and in the history of the dynasty, and skilled musicians acquainted with rhythm and melody, began to sing the praises of the king. The sound of their eulogies and their songs filled the whole palace. Others uttering tributes and clapping their hands recited the monarch's wonderful deeds. The birds in the trees near the palace and those confined in cages awoke and sang. Their notes mingled with the salutations of the brahmins, the music of the vinas, the chanting of the holy names of God and the praises of those describing the great deeds of the king. Eunuchs and servants stood near, ready to serve, as was their wont. Those who attended to the ablutions of the king, brought water scented with fragrant perfumes, in pitchers of gold. Charming and well-attired men and women came with oil, unguents, mirrors, combs, towels and other articles and all that was needed by the king was provided according to custom. Till sunrise, all awaited the king, then they addressed each other saying: " How is this, has his majesty not yet risen ? " Then the women, other than Kaushalya, who formerly attended on the king, began to waken their lord as was their usage. Having with affection and skill touched the body of the monarch, they found no sign of life in him. Then the women, knowing well the motion of the pulse and understanding the signs of sleep, began to tremble perceiving the king's condition. Fearing that the king no longer breathed, they shook like the narcal[1] grass in the midst of a flowing stream, and slowly became aware that their sovereign had passed away.

The Queens, Kaushalya and Sumitra, overcome with grief on account of the departure of their sons, lay as if dead. Suffering had rendered the chief queen pale and her body feeble. The two queens, their splendour dimmed by sorrow, resembled the stars hidden by clouds.

[1] Narcal grass—a species of reed.

Seeing the two queens lying insensible and the king dead, the women wept aloud in distress.

At the loud wailing of the attendant women, like female elephants bereft of their leader, Kaushalya and Sumitra came to themselves. Touching the body of the king and finding it cold, they fell senseless, crying: " O, My Lord," " O, My Lord." Lying on the earth, covered with dust, Queen Kaushalya resembled a star fallen from the skies.

The king being dead, the ladies of the inner apartments beheld the queen lying on the ground like a female naga.[1] The other consorts of the king with Kaikeyi, overcome with grief, fell unconscious to the earth.

The wailing of the women within, and those who now followed them, filled the whole place. The royal dwelling, bereft of joy and filled with the sound of distress, was thronged with afflicted relatives and friends mourning and weeping. The queens stricken with grief, lamenting piteously, like orphans cleaving to their departed parent, clasped the arms of the mighty monarch.

CHAPTER 66

The inhabitants of Ayodhya mourn for their lord

KAUSHALYA placed the head of the dead king, resembling an extinguished fire or a waterless ocean or the sun without lustre, on her lap and oppressed with grief, thus addressed Kaikeyi: " O Kaikeyi, thy ambition is fulfilled, now rule without further opposition. Having abandoned the king, enjoy the kingdom with thy son, O Thou of Evil Conduct! Rama having departed and the king also, I resemble a traveller on a dangerous and difficult path bereft of his companions. There is no further joy in life for me! Alas! what woman bereft of her lord, her deity, desires to continue to live? Kaikeyi alone is such a one, having abandoned all virtue. The greedy disregard the consequences of their acts, like a hungry man devouring poisonous

[1] Naga—one of the serpent race.

food without considering its effects. Alas! Kaikeyi has destroyed the dynasty of Raghu at the instigation of a hunch-backed woman! How bitterly will King Janaka mourn, on hearing that King Dasaratha, urged by Kaikeyi, has exiled Rama together with his consort. The lotus-eyed Rama, not knowing the king is dead, is unaware that I, to-day, am masterless and a widow! The daughter of King Janaka, the wretched Sita, unworthy of affliction will suffer intensely in the forest. Hearing the fearful roar of lions and tigers, in the dark night, she will cling in terror to Rama. The aged Janaka, whose only child is Sita, will assuredly die of grief, when acquainted with the sufferings inflicted on his daughter! I, to-day, in devotion to my lord, will enter the blazing fire embracing his body."

Hearing these words, the chief minister, versed in the tradition, drew Queen Kaushalya away from the body of the king, and placing it in a vessel filled with oil, to preserve it, performed the requisite ceremonies. The counsellors acquainted with the time-honoured duties, were unwilling to cremate the body of the king in the absence of the prince. As the body was lowered into the oil-filled vessel, the women of the palace wept bitterly, exclaiming: "Alas, the king is dead." Lifting up their arms, shedding tears and wailing pitiably, they cried: "O King, having separated us from the sweet-speaking Rama, why hast thou, too, abandoned us? How shall we live with the evil-minded Kaikeyi, who has exiled Rama and slain her lord? Alas! Shri Rama, the chief support of our life, has gone to the forest, relinquishing his royal portion. How can we live under the reproaches and tyranny of Kaikeyi in the absence of Rama and of thee? Will not she who exiled Rama, the mighty Lakshmana and Sita and abandoned the king, abandon us also?"

Then the chief queens, the consorts of King Dasaratha, overwhelmed with sorrow, shedding tears, felt themselves bereft of all happiness. Like the night without a moon or a lovely and youthful woman bereft of her lord, the city of Ayodhya appeared stricken. Filled with men and women weeping and lamenting, the city was unswept, its ways unadorned! The great sovereign, having through grief at the separation from his son, given up his life, the queens wept lying on the ground, till the sun sank below the horizon and the dark night crept on.

The friends and relatives of the monarch taking counsel together, being unwilling to cremate the body of the king, in the absence of his son, laid it, therefore, in a vessel of oil.

The king being dead, the inhabitants of the city filled the streets and courts, mourning for their lord, causing Ayodhya to resemble the night bereft of stars. Men and women gathered together, inveighing against the mother of Bharata, Queer Kaikeyi. All were distraught and bereft of joy!

CHAPTER 67

The elders recommend that a member of the house of Ikshwaku be appointed king

To the inhabitants of the city, lamenting and weeping, the night was as a high mountain, scaled with difficulty. The sun having risen, the brahmin advisers to the kingdom came together in the royal assembly, even those illustrious ones, Markandeya, Vamadeva, Kasyapa, Gautama, Katyayana and Javali. These renowned sages, together with the ministers, taking their seat in the presence of Vasishtha the excellent and chief priest, declared their mind, saying: "The past night has been like a hundred years to us. Afflicted, on account of his son's departure, the king has given up his life. The king is dead and Shri Rama has entered the forest, together with the mighty Lakshmana. The Princes Bharata and Shatrughna are in the the capital of the kingdom of their maternal grandfather. A member of the House of Ikshwaku must be appointed king lest the country fall into ruin. On a kingdom destitute of a ruler, clouds charged with lightning and thunder pour down rain and hail! In a rulerless land, the peasants sow no grain; fathers and sons oppose each other and wives no longer remain subject to their husbands! In a rulerless land, there is no peace, thieves and brigands exercise their power; women, unfaithful to their consorts, leave their homes! Where women lose their virtue, trust is also lost. In a rulerless land, there

are no assemblies, nor do the people visit pleasant parks and gardens or build temples and homes of rest. In such a land, the self-controlled brahmins offer no sacrifice nor do those of pious vows, assist them in the sacred rite. In a rulerless land, the brahmins do not receive their due share of the sacrificial fees; neither do actors nor leaders of song or dance find joy in such a land. The holy festivals promoting the land's prosperity are no longer held, nor do those reciting the holy tradition give satisfaction to their hearers. In a rulerless land, virgins adorned with golden ornaments, do not frequent the flower gardens at close of day, nor do the devotees of pleasure, riding swift chariots in company with charming damsels, repair to the forest. In such a land, the wealthy are not protected, nor does the husbandman, the cowherd and the shepherd sleep at ease with open doors. In a rulerless land, great elephants of sixty years of age do not wander on the royal highways adorned with tinkling bells. The twanging of the archer's bow is no longer heard, nor do the merchants travelling the roads in security bring their goods to sell from distant lands. In a rulerless land, the self-controlled sage, fixing his mind, in contemplation, on his identity with the all-pervading spirit, receives no hospitality when night falls. Wealth is not unassailable, nor are man's needs supplied, the armies have no leaders, nor can they match the enemy in war. In a rulerless country, no man, gorgeously apparelled, riding in an excellent chariot, drawn by swift steeds, can go forth without fear; nor can the learned disputant propound his doctrines in the city or forest. In such a land, garlands and sweetmeats, alms or other gifts, are not offered by worshippers as a sacrifice, nor in the springtime, do the princes, like blossoming trees, adorned with sandalwood and ambergris, walk abroad. A kingdom without a sovereign is like a river without water, a forest without vegetation, or a cow without a keeper. As a chariot is known by its standard, as a fire is indicated by smoke, so the king, a light representing the kingdom, has been extinguished. No man loves his own kind in a rulerless land, but each slays and devours the other. Atheists and materialists, exceeding the limits of their caste, assume dominion over others, there being no king to exercise control over them. As the eyes continuously point out what

is dangerous to the body, promoting its welfare, so the king ever regards the advantage of his people, promoting truth and ethical conduct. The king leads his people in the path of righteousness and guides them in integrity, he is the parent of his subjects and the greatest of benefactors. In the path of duty he excels even Yama, Kuvera, Indra and Varuna. The king, discerning good and evil, protects his kingdom; bereft of him, the country is enveloped in darkness. O Holy Vasishtha, while the king lived, we obeyed thy[1] mandates as the sea keeps within its boundaries. O Great Brahmin, consider our words and the danger threatening this, our kingdom, and appoint someone as king if he be of the house of Ikshwaku."

CHAPTER 68

Messengers are sent to Prince Bharata

SHRI VASISHTHA, having heard the pronouncement of the ministers and brahmins, said: "The king has bequeathed the kingdom to Bharata, who, with his brother abides happily in the house of his maternal uncle, therefore, dispatch swift messengers speedily, to bring back the two princes. This and naught else should be done."

Then all said: "Be it so, O Lord."

Vasishtha then said to Siddartha, Vijaya, Jayanta, Asoka and Nandana:[2] "Come hither and attend to what I command you to do: On swift steeds set out for the city of Rajagraha and, concealing all signs of grief, thus address Prince Bharata:' The holy priest Shri Vasishtha and his counsellors salute thee and inform thee that an urgent matter awaits thy attention in the capital'."

"Have a care not to disclose to him the fall of the Raghu dynasty nor speak of Rama's exile or the king's death. Take with you silken robes and excellent gems for the King of Kaikeya and for Prince Bharata, and depart without delay."

[1] Shri Vasishtha—being the king's spiritual preceptor.
[2] Ministers of the king.

The messengers received the commands of Shri Vasishtha and taking provision for the journey went to their own houses. Then mounting swift horses, accustomed to prolonged travel, they started for the kingdom of Kaikeya. Having taken leave of the holy Guru, equipped with provisions, they departed in haste. Their course, along the bank of the Malini, lay south between the Uparathala mountain and north of Pralamba. They crossed the sacred Ganges at Hastinapura and proceeded westward arriving in Panchala (the Punjab) by way of Kuru Jangula. On the way, they beheld many lakes filled with limpid water and translucent streams and passing speedily onwards, reached the river Sharadanda, full of pure water and frequented by many species of waterfowl.

On the bank of that river grew the sacred tree Satyapayachan, to which the messengers made obeisance and then entered the city of Kalinga. Passing through the village of Abikala, they crossed the river Ikshumati issuing from the mountain Bodhibhavana, a territory formerly belonging to the House of Ikshwaku. There the messengers drank the water of the river from the palms of their hands and encountered certain brahmins versed in the Veda.

Traversing the land of Vahlika, they descried the mountain Sudamana which bore the marks of the Feet of Vishnu, and duly worshipped it. They beheld the rivers Vipasha and Shalmali and many pools, lakes and reservoirs. Proceeding further on their journey, according to the instructions of their master, they saw lions, tigers, elephants and various other beasts.

After a long period, the horses became fatigued, but the messengers pressed on to the town of Giribraja in the kingdom of Kaikeya. For the sake of performing the will of their lord and to preserve the royal dynasty and the honour of the House of Dasaratha, without relaxing their pace, the messengers entered the city at nightfall.

CHAPTER 69

Prince Bharata's inauspicious dream

On the night the messengers reached the city, Prince Bharata had a most inauspicious dream. Seeing that evil dream, the son of the emperor, when the night ended, was much distressed. His intimate friends, the companions of his own age, seeing him in distress, spoke pleasing words in the assembly and related humorous traditions to distract his mind. Some played on vinas for his entertainment, others danced, acted and narrated stories.

Despite the endeavours of his amiable companions, Prince Bharata remained melancholy. At length, they addressed him, saying: "O Friend, we have tried in vain to entertain thee, why dost thou not smile?"

Bharata replied: "Hear the cause of my sadness. In a dream, I saw my father in faded apparel, his hair dishevelled, falling from a mountain peak into a pit of cow dung. There, I saw that great king, wallowing like a frog and drinking oil from the palms of his hands; afterwards, I beheld him eating rice mixed with sesamum seed, his body besmeared with oil, he being immersed in it. Again, in that dream, I saw the sea dry up and the moon fall on the earth and the world plunged in darkness. The tusks of the royal elephants were broken in pieces and a blazing fire was suddenly extinguished. I saw the earth rent and the leaves of the trees wither and the mountains riven and emit smoke. I beheld the king on an iron seat, clad in black and women attired in black and yellow mocking him. That virtuous king, adorned with sandalwood paste, wearing garlands of red flowers, seated in a chariot drawn by asses went southwards. I saw a female demon of monstrous shape clothed in red deriding the king. This fearful vision has been seen by me. Either myself or Rama or the king or Lakshmana will surely die. When, in a dream, one is seen riding in a chariot drawn by asses, the smoke of his funeral pyre will soon ascend. On this account, I am distraught, nought gives me joy, my throat is choked and my mind confused. I see no reason for fear, yet I am apprehensive. I cannot speak

or breathe, my body has lost its power, I am agitated and cannot control my distress. Never have I seen so threatening a dream! Reflecting on it, I am perturbed, fear has taken possession of my heart and I know not if I shall ever again behold the king."

CHAPTER 70

The message is delivered; Bharata and Shatrughna leave the palace

WHILE Bharata was relating his dream, the messengers from Ayodhya, overcome with weariness, entered the city of Rajagrahapura within the impassable moat.

Having approached the King of Kaikeya and the heir-apparent, Prince Yudhajita, and being received by them with due hospitality, they addressed Prince Bharata saying: "The chief priest, Shri Vasishtha and his counsellors send their greetings! Return speedily to Ayodhya, an urgent matter awaits thy attention there. O Great Prince, taking these precious robes and jewelled ornaments sent to thee, present them to thy maternal uncle."

Shri Bharata, accepting the gifts offered them to his maternal uncle with great affection, then making provision for the messengers and entertaining them duly, he afterwards said to them: "O Messengers, is my father the king well? Is the great Ramachandra well, and my brother Prince Lakshmana? Is the Queen Kaushalya, the upholder of dharma, in good health? She who is virtuous and a patron of brahmins, who is ever to be worshipped, who is wise and the chief queen? Is the second of my father's queens, Sumitra the mother of Lakshmana and Shatrughna, well? And my mother Kaikeyi, self-willed, given to anger, arrogant and accounting herself wise, is it well with her? What message has she sent to me?"

The messengers thus addressed by Prince Bharata, answered with respect: "O Lion among Men, those whose welfare is dear to thee, are well. Prosperity awaits thee, therefore, summon thy chariot."

Prince Bharata said: "I will seek permission of the king to depart and inform him I must go without delay."

Thus, dismissing the messengers, Prince Bharata approached his grandfather and said: "Your Majesty, urged by the messengers, I wish to return to my father in haste, I will come again, when thou art pleased to call me."

King Kaikeya smelling the head of the prince, addressed him in comfortable words, saying: "O Bharata, Kaikeyi is blessed in thee, a virtuous son! Carry my greetings to thy mother and father. Salute also the holy Sage Vasishtha, and the wise and pious brahmins in my name and greet the mighty warriors Rama and Lakshmana."

King Kaikeya, then, bidding Bharata farewell, commending him, gave him great elephants and precious shawls, woollen cloths and deerskins. He gave him also with great veneration, much wealth, two thousand necklaces, coral and gold ornaments and sixteen hundred excellent horses. He sent also wise and trustworthy counsellors to attend him. Then Prince Yudhajita gave Bharata two stately elephants named Iravata and Indrasihra and many mules to transport his gifts. His uncle gave him also certain fierce dogs, bred in the palace with large teeth equalling tigers in strength.

Shri Bharata praised the gifts conferred on him and sought permission to leave without delay. His heart was heavy on account of his fearful dream and the urgency of the messengers.

The prince came forth from the inner apartments of the palace and, surrounded by elephants and horses, stood on the royal highway. Entering the king's apartment, unchallenged, Shri Bharata bade farewell to all, then mounting his chariot with Prince Shatrughna, he started on his journey. Servants, horses, camels, bulls and mules followed the chariot of the prince. Escorted by the private counsellors of the king, together with the army, the patient and highly valiant Bharata together with Shatrughna left the palace fearlessly, as the perfected ones leave the region of Indra.

CHAPTER 71

Prince Bharata sees Ayodhya filled with unhappy people

THAT valiant and resplendent prince, turning eastward, came to the river Suddama, and passing over it, reached the broad Hladini and the Satali flowing westward. Having crossed over the river at Iladhana, he reached Parvata and the stream in which all objects thrown are petrified, then proceeding further he forded the Shalyakartana river. Then the righteous and truth loving prince ascended the mountains and crossed the river Shilavaha near the forest Chitraratha, arriving at the confluence of the Ganges and Saraswati, and traversing the land of Viramatsya, entered the Bharunda forest. At length, reaching the swift and joy-inspiring Kulinga river, which descends from the mountains, he crossed the Yamuna and allowed his army to rest. There, the weary horses were refreshed and his followers bathed and drank, taking water with them for future use on the way. Thereafter, Prince Bharata entered the uninhabited forest on a great Bhadra elephant, speedily traversing it. Finding they were unable to cross the Gunga at Unchudhana, they went to the place called Pragavata and crossing there passed over another river named Kutikoshtaka; then with his army, he reached the village of Dharmavardhana. Resting for a while at Varutha, the son of Dasaratha went towards the east to the wood called Ujjihana which was filled with kedumbra[1] trees. Arriving at the groves of sala[2] and bhanduka[3] trees, Bharata, leaving his army to follow slowly, went forward with haste, halting at the village of Sarvatirtha. Then crossing the river Uttamika, he passed over several other streams with the help of mountain ponies. At Hastiprastaka, he crossed the river Kutika and at Lohitya, the Sukatavati. Arriving at the forest of Sahavana, having crossed the Sthanumati near Eksala, he traversed the Gaumati at Vinata. His horses being greatly fatigued by the journey, the prince halted the night at Salawan and at dawn beheld Ayodhya.

[1] Kedumbra—a kind of acacia.
[2] Sala tree—sal tree, Shorea robusta.
[3] Bhanduka—Calosanthes indica.

Having spent seven nights on the way, seeing Ayodhya from a distance, the prince said to his charioteer: "O Charioteer, this would appear to be the renowned and taintless city of Ayodhya abounding in green lawns, but at a distance it resembles a heap of yellow dust; formerly the sound of the recitation of the Veda was heard, intoned by the brahmins, and the city was frequented by royal sages. To-day, I do not hear the cheerful cries of men and women in pursuit of pleasure! The woods at eventide were formerly filled with people, running here and there in sport, but to-day they are deserted and silent. O Charioteer, this is not like Ayodhya to me, but seems to be a wilderness. None of the nobly born are seen coming and going in chariots or riding on elephants and horses. The flower gardens were erstwhile filled with cheerful people and the orchards with those who made merry there! These gardens, once abounding in flowers and trees, with pleasant groves and arbours, to-day seem to mourn. I no longer hear the cry of deer or the birds singing with joy. O Friend, why do the breezes, redolent with the scent of sandalwood and ambergris, not blow as formerly, over the city? In the past, the sound of drums and the music of the Vina was heard by us, now all is silent! I see portentous signs and evil omens, my mind is heavy on account of these forebodings. O Charioteer, without apparent cause my heart beats fast and painfully, my mind is clouded, and apprehension freezes my senses."

Entering the capital by the northern gate, his horses being overcome with weariness, the guards, enquiring as to his welfare, sought to accompany him on his way. But Bharata, sick at heart, declined their company, though with due deference.

He said: "O Charioteer, I behold the houses with their doors set open, bereft of splendour and emitting no fragrance of incense or sacrificial offering! Filled with unhappy people and those who are fasting, the houses are destitute of all splendour. No garlands hang from any dwelling and the courtyards lie neglected and unswept. The temples, without attendant priests, have lost their former splendour, none worship the gods and the sacrificial pavilions are deserted. The shops where formerly flowers were sold and other merchandise, are neglected, and the merchants appear dispirited and anxious over the cessation of their

trade. Birds in the sacred groves seem joyless and men and women in soiled attire, weeping and lamenting, wasted with grief, roam about the city."

Speaking thus to the charioteer and seeing the city's distress, Prince Bharata drove towards the palace. Beholding the capital once gay as Indra's city, with the roads and courts deserted and the houses covered with dust, he was overcome with anguish. Struck by these painful portents formerly unknown to him, Bharata, with bowed head, his heart filled with dread, entered his father's palace.

CHAPTER 72

Queen Kaikeyi begins to relate what has occurred

NOT seeing his father in the palace, Bharata, desirous of beholding his mother, went to her apartment. Kaikeyi, seeing her son after a long absence, with a joyous heart, rose from her golden couch. Observing the apartment of his mother, divested of splendour, Bharata reverently touched her feet. She, having kissed the head of her son, embracing him again, seated him on her lap, and said: " O Child! How many days have passed since thou didst leave thy grandfather's abode? Having journeyed in haste, I trust thou art not fatigued? O Child, are thy grandfather and uncle well? Tell me, O Dear One, hast thou been in health since thou hast visited that other country?"

Shri Bharata thus questioned, by his mother, related all that had happened. He said: " O Mother, seven days and seven nights have passed, since I left my grandfather's home. Both he and my uncle are well. The parting gifts of wealth and gems which the King of Kaikeya gave me, I have left on the way, to follow me, the beasts of burden being weary! The messengers who conveyed the orders of the king, bade me return with all speed. Now, O Mother, answer what I would feign ask? Why is this, thy golden couch, vacated by the king?

"Why do the king's subjects appear wretched? The king was wont to dwell principally in thy palace, where is he to-day? I have come hither to enter his august presence! Where is my father now, I have come to offer salutations to his feet? Is he in the apartment of my chief mother, Queen Kaushalya?" Kaikeyi, knowing all that had taken place but filled with ambition, answered Prince Bharata, as yet ignorant of the matter. Imparting the unpleasant news in honeyed accents, she said: "That fate, which inevitably overtakes all beings, has befallen that great soul, that renowned and mighty monarch the support of his people, thy sire!"

The guileless Prince Bharata, born of a great family, hearing these words, overwhelmed by grief, instantly fell to the ground and falling striking his hands on the earth, cried: "Alas! I am undone!" That resplendent prince, deeply moved on learning of the death of his father, began to lament, crying: "On this couch, my father appeared like the moon in autumn, to-day on account of his absence, this pleasant bed resembles the sky bereft of stars or the ocean without water!"

Heaving deep sighs, weeping bitterly and covering his face with a cloth, the prince continued to mourn.

Queen Kaikeyi, seeing Bharata lying on the ground, overwhelmed with sorrow, like the branch of a shala tree, severed by the blows of an axe, raised him up and said to her godlike son who resembled the moon, the sun or the elephant in splendour: "O Son of a King! O Most Illustrious One! Rise! Rise! Pious men like thee, do not thus yield to grief! O Wise One! As the radiance of the sun is fixed in that orb, so must thou who art devoted to charity, sacrifice and good conduct and who follow the injunctions of the Vedas, be calm!"

Prince Bharata, rolling on the earth, wept for a long time and then answered his mother sorrowfully, saying: "O Mother, thinking the king was undertaking a great sacrifice, having bestowed the throne on Shri Rama, I started for home with great joy, but now I see matters are otherwise and my mind is torn with anguish, since I no longer behold my ever magnanimous parent! O Mother, from what malady did the king suffer, that he was carried away in my absence? How fortunate are my brothers, Shri Rama and Lakshmana, who

have performed the monarch's obsequies ! If the great sovereign had been aware of my return, would he not have bent his head and embraced me ? Alas ! Where is that royal hand, the touch of which filled me with delight and which cleansed my body from the dust ? O Mother, where is my sagacious brother Rama, whose servant I am and who resembles my father ? Tell me quickly where he may be found ? Since my virtuous and enlightened brother has now become as a father to me, I desire to take refuge at his feet, he alone is my sole support ! O Mother, what commands concerning me did the righteous and learned king, the ever-truthful monarch of firm vows, give ? I desire to hear the last words of the great sovereign ? "

Thus questioned, Queen Kaikeyi openly answered, saying : " The king, at the time of death, did not speak thy name but cried ' O Rama, O Sita, O Lakshmana ' and thus gave up his life ! Thy father, bound by the ties of fate and duty, like a mighty elephant, caught in ambush, uttered these words at the end : ' Those who see Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, returning from the forest, will attain their desire '."

As Kaikeyi revealed this unpleasant intelligence, the prince grew yet more distracted and enquired of his mother : " O Mother, where is the virtuous Rama, where is he now with Sita and his brother Lakshmana ? "

Thus questioned, the queen began to relate what had occurred, supposing the news of the unpleasing event would be welcome to her son.

She said : " O Child, that prince, clothed in robes of bark, has entered the great Dandaka forest with Sita and Lakshmana."

Hearing from his mother that Rama had entered the forest, Prince Bharata was alarmed, filled with misgivings and concerned for the honour of his House. He said : " O Mother, how is this ? Has Shri Rama, without reason, slain any, either rich or poor ? Or has he looked on the wife of another with desire ? For what reason has Rama, versed in the scriptures, been exiled to the forest ? "

Then the mother of Bharata, imbued with feminine qualities, capricious and calculating, began to relate the whole matter. Hearing her son's words, Kaikeyi, gratified, vainly imagining herself wise, said : " My Son, neither has Rama robbed a

brahmin of his wealth, nor has he slain any, rich or poor, without reason, neither has Rama looked on another's wife with desire! My Son, having heard that he was to be proclaimed regent, I requested thy father to banish Rama and bestow the kingdom on thee! Thy sire, in order to honour the promise made to me, fulfilled my request. He sent Rama, together with Sita and Lakshmana to the forest. Then that mighty monarch, unable to endure the separation from his son, died. O Righteous Prince, now do thou rule the kingdom! For thy sake, I have contrived all this! My Son, do not grieve, do not afflict thyself, the kingdom and the capital, being now without a ruler, depend on thee for support. Therefore, seeking advice from Shri Vasishtha and the learned brahmins, perform the funeral rites of thy great sire and, without hesitation, accept the throne!"

CHAPTER 73

Prince Bharata reproaches his mother

HEARING of the death of his father and the exile of his brothers, Prince Bharata, deeply afflicted, answered Queen Kaikeyi: "What will the throne avail me, since I am stricken by the death of my father and bereft of my brother, who was as a parent to me? Thou hast destroyed the king, and banished Rama, causing him to become an ascetic! Thou hast thus rubbed salt into the wounds which thou hast inflicted! Thou hast entered this royal House for its extinction, like the night of death! My father, unaware that thou wert an all-consuming fire, supported thee. O Sinful One, thou hast deprived the king of life! O Thou Destroyer of the Family, overpowered with avarice, thou hast shattered the peace of the hearth. Through union with thee, my father, a lover of truth, has suffered untold misery and grief! Wherefore hast thou slain my virtuous sire? Wherefore hast thou exiled Rama? Hard indeed were it to live with such a mother! How will Kaushalya and Sumitra now endure life? My elder brother, Shri Ramachandra, ever devoted to his duty and to the service of his Guru, treated thee

as his own mother. So also my elder mother, Queen Kaushalya, knowing what would befall, yet acted towards thee as a true sister, in a proper spirit. Thou hast sent her son to the forest in ascetic's garb and still thou dost not grieve? What hast thou gained by sending that renowned hero, Rama, to the forest, Rama, who was unacquainted with suffering? Wert thou ignorant of my great love for Raghava, that thou, possessed by avarice, committed this great sin, O Mother? By what power can I rule, deprived of Lakshmana and that Lion among men, Shri Rama? King Dasaratha ever depended on that mighty and valorous Rama, as the forest depends on Mount Meru! How can I sustain the burden of the kingdom, without the support of Rama? How should a calf sustain the load that taxes the strength of a full-grown bull? Even if it were possible for me to rule through wisdom and sound policy, yet would I not allow thy evil intention in seeking the kingdom for thy son, to prevail! I should have abandoned thee, O Mother, did I not know that Rama regards thee as his mother also! O Thou Evil-minded One, thou hast brought disgrace on the dynasty of my ancestors! How didst thou conceive such a purpose, bringing shame into our lives? It is the immemorial custom of our House, that the eldest brother shall occupy the throne and the younger brothers obey him. Thou art not acquainted with the duty of a king nor dost thou know the rules of government. In the House of Ikshwaku, the succession of the eldest son is enjoined. To-day, thou hast cast into the dust the glory and integrity of the House of Ikshwaku, that was enriched by the noble conduct of its kings! Thou, too, wert born of a renowned and royal House, how camest thou to entertain this evil intention? O Mother, let it be known to thee that I will never fulfil thy evil desires, come what may, since thou hast introduced that which is destructive of life into this royal House! I shall now bring my sinless brother, Rama, back to the capital and thwart thee! Not only will I cause Rama to return from the forest, but I will serve him with my whole heart!"

Thus reproaching Kaikeyi, himself afflicted, with harsh words, Bharata spoke once more, roaring like a lion in the caves of the Mandara mountain.

CHAPTER 74

He laments the death of his father and the exile of Shri Rama

Shri Bharata denounced his mother in great anger, saying :—

" O Cruel-hearted One, O Wicked Being, thou art without virtue, enter the forest, I am about to die ! Weep for me ; since thou hast deserted thy consort, do not mourn for him. Tell me, what harm had the king or the most virtuous Rama done to thee, that thou hast slain the one and exiled the other ? O Kaikeyi, the sin by which thou hast destroyed the dynasty is equal to the murder of a brahmin ! Do thou enter hell ! Thou hast no right to inhabit the region to which the king has gone ! Thy deed and guilt are infamous. In denouncing Rama, who is beloved of all the world, thou hast secured me a kingdom, but brought me ignominy. Thou art the cause of my father's death and the exile of Rama, and also of my dishonour. Thy heart is adamant, thou art not my mother but an enemy in the form of a mother ! O Slayer of thy husband, thou dost not merit that one should address thee ! O Defamer of the fair name of this dynasty, thou art the cause of distress to my mothers, Queen Kaushalya and Sumitra ! Thou hast forfeited the title of daughter to the great King Ashwapati ; thou art surely a demon born in that family to destroy my father's line ! Thou hast banished Rama to the forest, he, who ever delighted in virtue and thou hast deprived my illustrious father of his life ! It is I who must bear the weight of thine iniquity, who am fatherless, bereft of my two brothers and an object of universal loathing ! O Thou Sinner, O Traveller on the path of self-destruction, say what state shalt thou attain, who hast deprived the virtuous Kaushalya of her husband and her son ? O Evil One, didst thou not know that Shri Rama was the chief asylum of his relatives, the son of Kaushalya and a father to me ? All relatives are dear, but to a mother, the son is dearest, since he is born of the body and heart of the father. Hast thou forgotten this truth ? "

In ancient times, the cow Kamadhenu, worshipped by the

gods, beholding two of her sons, weary with ploughing, swooned away. At that time, the King of the Celestials, Indra, was wandering on the earth and the fragrant tears of Kamadhenu fell upon him. Experiencing the sweet odour issuing from the body of the sacred cow, Indra realised her superior worth and startled, looked upward and beheld, in the sky, the afflicted Kamadhenu, weeping piteously. The Bearer of the Mace,[1] distressed on seeing the renowned Kamadhenu shedding tears, addressed her with humility and said: "O Benefactor of the World, why dost thou weep? Is it the premonition of some future calamity which causes thee to lament thus?"

The wise Kamadhenu, patiently answered: "O Devaraj, thou hast no cause for fear, I am afflicted on account of the suffering of two of my sons. See, how wretched they are, how wasted and oppressed by the sun's heat! O Devaraj! The ploughman has struck them cruelly! Born of my body, I am filled with grief to see them yoked to the heavy plough! Verily nothing is dearer to a mother than her son."

Indra, perceiving that the cow mourned over the wretched state of two of her innumerable sons, recognised that to a mother nothing is dearer than a son!

"O Mother, Kamadhenu extends her blessings equally to all and has the power to fulfil the desires of others. If she, who is constantly producing thousands of offspring, filled with maternal love, mourns thus for two sons, how then, O Kaikeyi, will Kaushalya bear the exile of her only son? Thou hast brought about the separation of Rama from his mother Kaushalya and for this thou shalt not know happiness in this or in the other world! I shall perform the last rites for my sire and then, with my heart and soul serve my brother and carefully promote his honour. Having brought back Shri Rama to the capital, I, myself, shall inhabit the forest. O Thou, of evil intent, how shall I endure thine iniquity, when looked on by the people of the capital with sorrow-stricken gaze? Now it befits thee to enter the fire or hang thyself in the Dandaka forest, death alone is thy desert! Only when Rama returns and that Prince of Truth is by my side, shall I find peace and my purpose be accomplished!"

[1] Indra was sometimes called the "Bearer of the Mace".

Bharata, lamenting and breathing like a serpent, fell to the earth like an elephant tormented by the goad. His eyes red with anger, his dress loosened, his jewels cast aside, he fell like the banner of Indra, uprooted at the close of a ceremony.

CHAPTER 75

He seeks to console Queen Kaushalya

THE valiant Bharata, regaining consciousness, his eyes suffused with tears, perceived his mother filled with distress. Seated in the midst of his counsellors, he poured forth reproaches on his mother saying: "It was never my desire to rule, nor did I consult my mother in this matter; I was not acquainted with the king's intention to confer the crown on Rama, being far from the capital with Shatrughna. I knew nought of the exile of Shri Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, nor how it came to pass. My heart is filled with anguish."

Kaushalya, hearing the sound of Bharata's weeping, said to Sumitra: "Bharata, the son of the cruel Kaikeyi, has come, I wish to see the prudent Bharata."

The queen, pale and weak on account of her separation from Rama, advanced trembling to where Bharata was, while the prince with his brother Shatrughna started likewise for the apartment of the queen. The two brothers beheld the wretched queen proceeding with tottering footsteps and were filled with distress. Bowing down to Kaushalya, they wept bitterly, then the chief queen embraced Bharata sobbing with grief and said: "It was thy desire to rule and thy cruel mother has accomplished this matter without hindrance, but for what reason has this pitiless queen sent my son to the forest in ascetic's garb? Let Queen Kaikeyi banish me also to that region where my illustrious and golden-complexioned Rama abides! If not, I will go together with Sumitra to where Rama dwells, preceded by the sacrificial fire. O Bharata, do thou take me to where my son, that lion among men, in great affliction is practising asceticism.

Queen Kaikeyi has made thee sovereign of this country, replete with wealth, grain, horses, elephants and chariots."

Hearing the bitter words of Queen Kaushalya, Bharata was pained as a man who suffers when his wound is probed by a lancet. Agitated and confused, he fell at the feet of the queen lamenting. Then growing composed, with joined palms, he addressed the sorrowing queen: "O Mother, thou knowest how great is my love for Rama and also that I am innocent in this matter. Why dost thou reproach me? May he, who is the cause of the exile of Rama, forget the teachings of the Vedas and the holy tradition. May he, who has given his consent to the exile of Rama, become a slave of the lowest caste or incur the sin of killing a cow. May such a man be subject to the same punishment as one who withholds the wages of his labourers. May he who has consented to the banishment of the holy prince, bear the same guilt as one rebelling against a king, who protects his subjects as his own offspring! May the guilt of a king taking the sixth part of the revenue of his people and yet failing to protect them, be his, who exiled Rama.

"May the fruits of the sin incurred by one who, well-equipped with elephants, horses and chariots and all weapons, does not fight according to the law of righteousness, be his! May he, who agreed to the exile of Rama, forget the teachings of Vedanta which ensure happiness, and all the secrets obtained from his spiritual preceptor by serving him! May such a one not live to see the coronation of Prince Rama whose countenance equals the sun and moon in splendour. May that wretch incur the sin of one, who, partaking of milk and rice, does not make an offering to his ancestors and guests or to the gods. May he be guilty of not honouring his spiritual preceptor by offering salutations to him in a fitting manner.

"May that wretch, who gave consent to the exile of Rama, bear the same guilt as one who strikes a cow, reviles his Guru or betrays his friends! May he incur the guilt of one who forswears his trust. May he, who participated in the exile of Rama, reap the sin of one who does not do good to others.

"May the wretch, who ordered the exile of Rama, bear the guilt of one, who, partaking of sweetmeats, fails to share them with his servants, women, children or those surrounding him,

or one who, living on excellent food, gives to his inferiors that which is raw and ill-cooked. May he, by whom Rama was sent into exile, die without marrying a woman of his own caste or producing offspring or performing the fire ritual! May he not behold the offspring born of his spouse! May his years be brief! May he be slain in battle, retreating from a superior foe in fear, or may he be as one who slays a fleeing enemy. May he, like one dressed in rags, demented, carrying a skull in his hand, wander about begging from door to door! May he who has conspired to send Rama to the forest be given over to wine, women and gambling and become an object of contempt on account of his concupiscence and anger. May he ever indulge in the practice of unrighteousness and forget his duty and distribute immense wealth in charity to the undeserving! May the accumulated wealth and extensive possessions of the one who has furthered the exile of Rama, be stolen away by thieves. May the sin of him who sleeps at sunrise or sunset be his! May the sin of him who is guilty of arson or looks with desire on the wife of his spiritual preceptor or who betrays his friend, be his, who has advocated the exile of Shri Rama! May he, who acquiesced in the exile of Rama be deprived of the worship of his ancestors and parents as also of the funeral rites! May such a one, even now, be driven from the society of good people and lose the renown and merit of companionship with the virtuous! May his mind never be devoted to such deeds as are undertaken by the righteous! May that man who sought to exile Rama, fail to obey his mother and ever be employed n evil deeds! May he maintain a large family in extreme poverty! May he, ever restless, be consumed with fever! May he be guilty of that sin incurred by one, who fails to satisfy a miserable suppliant who looks to him for succour! May he be deceitful, slanderous, base, depraved and ever walk in fear of authority! May he incur the guilt of one who disregards his chaste and devoted wife, who approaches him in the season of her flowering! May he be dull-witted and abandoning his lawful spouse, may he live in sin with other women! May the guilt of a brahmin who abandons his children, who are dying of hunger be his! May he be like one who defiles a reservoir or administers poison to another! May that man

lose the power of his limbs, as he who seeks to impede the hospitality to be shown to a brahmin, by speaking ill of him! May his be the sin of one who drinks the milk of the cow that possesses unweaned calves! May he incur the sin of him, who, having water in his dwelling, turns the thirsty man from his door! May he bear the guilt of him, who arbitrating between two learned disputants, grants victory to the one he favours!"

With these words, Prince Bharata, seeking to console Queen Kaushalya for the separation from her son, fell to the ground, overcome with distress.

The queen then addressed him, who, distraught and afflicted, seeking to establish his innocence, had fallen to the earth, and said: "My Son, my pain is increased by the words thou hast uttered but fortunate it is that the hearts of Lakshmana and thyself are fixed in love of thy brother. Assuredly thou wilt enter the region attained by the blest."

Then the queen, taking the mighty-armed prince in her lap, wept aloud.

The prince whose heart was rent with grief also wept in an excess of sorrow. Caressed by the queen, lamenting wildly, lying on the earth and sighing heavily, he passed the night in this wise.

CHAPTER 76

The prince commences the performance of the funeral rites

SHRI VASISHTHA, renowned among the sages, beholding Shri Bharata overcome by grief, addressed him in sage words, saying: "O Illustrious Prince, may happiness be thine, restrain thy grief! The time has now come to perform the obsequies of the great king!"

Bharata, lying on the earth, heard the commands of the holy sage, and rising, began to perform the funeral rites.

The attendants now removed the body of the monarch from the vessel of oil and laid it on the earth. Though the body

had assumed a yellow hue through being immersed in oil for many days, yet it appeared as if the king slept.

They then laid the king on a couch set with gems and Bharata, overwhelmed with grief, began to lament. He said: "O Great King, I know not why, in mine absence, thou didst send Rama to the forest. Whither art thou gone, leaving me bereft of Rama, that Lion among men and the Doer of famous deeds? O Great Sovereign, who with a constant mind is able to preserve his mighty kingdom? Thou art dead and Shri Rama is banished. O Mighty Ruler, this earth is widowed and divested of all beauty without thee! Without thee, the capital resembles a moonless night."

Shri Vasishtha again addressed Shri Bharata, perceiving him still to be a prey to grief and said: "O Mighty-armed Prince this is no time for giving way to sorrow or procrastination, now perform the last rites for the king."

Thus addressed, Shri Bharata with the aid of the brahmins and the spiritual preceptor of the monarch, inaugurated the funeral ceremonies.

In the sacrificial hall, the priests performed the fire ritual. The servitors placed the body of the king on a litter and conveyed it thence, weeping and lamenting. Scattering golden coins, and silver flowers and laying cloths before the bier, they proceeded on their way, while before the palace, sandalwood, ambergris and incense were kindled.

On the banks of the river Sarayu, a funeral pyre of devadaru,[1] sandal and other fragrant woods, was raised. Aromatic herbs were thrown on the pyre and the body of the king laid upon it. The sacrificing priests poured oblations on the funeral pile, to the end that the monarch should attain the beatific state, and intoned the traditional mantrams, whilst the brahmins, acquainted with the Sama Veda,[2] sang the Sama hymns.

The queens, carried in palanquins, attended by the royal and aged guards, approached the funeral pyre, weeping. Then they, overcome with grief, together with the priests circumambulated the blazing body of the king. The piteous wailing of the stricken Queens and the cries of distress of innumerable

[1] Devadaru—a species of pine.
[2] Sama Veda—the third Veda.

women following them, resembled the call of the krauncha birds in the mating season. Then the queens, abandoning their vehicles, approached the bank of the river Sarayu and, together with Prince Bharata, the counsellors and ministers, offered libations of water; thereafter, weeping bitterly, they returned to the capital, where for the period of ten days they slept on the bare earth.

CHAPTER 77

The ceremonies are continued

On the eleventh day, Prince Bharata purified himself and on the twelfth day he performed the Sapindi[1] ceremony, and distributed jewels, gold, silver, gorgeous apparel and other articles among the brahmins.

He also gave in charity countless white goats and cows, male and female servants, chariots and horses. On the thirteenth day, the mighty-armed Bharata, overcome with grief, went to collect the ashes of the king and, standing near the funeral pyre, spoke in a voice choked with emotion. He said: "O Lord, my brother, Ramachandra, to whom thou hadst entrusted me, has entered the forest and thou, also, hast abandoned me, helpless and wretched as I am. O Father, where hast thou gone, abandoning Mother Kaushalya, whose son is now exiled?"

Seeing the white ashes of the king's bones and the body wholly consumed, Bharata burst into fresh lamentation, and weeping, fell on the earth. The people tried to raise the prince who was lying on the ground like the banner of Indra, its support broken.[2] The counsellors raised up Prince Bharata as the sages formerly lifted up King Yayati, who had fallen from heaven on the termination of the fruit of his merit. Perceiving Bharata, overcome with grief, Shatrughna, remembering his sire, also fell senseless to the ground.

[1] Sapindi ceremony—the establishing of connection with kindred through obsequial offerings.

[2] An allusion to the Shakra-Dhwana ceremony, in which a banner is erected on a pillar or tree, in honour of Indra.

Being somewhat restored, they called to mind the excellent qualities of their illustrious father and Shatrughna cried: " The boons exacted by Manthara are the ocean inhabited by the crocodile Kaikeyi, in which we are submerged. O Father, where art thou gone, abandoning thy tender and beloved son Bharata? Why hast thou abjured us, thou who wast wont to give us delicious food, fitting gifts, robes and ornaments? Who will now confer these favours on us? Why is the earth not riven, thus deprived of an illustrious and pious sovereign? Alas! My father has departed to heaven and Shri Rama has gone to the forest! How can I continue to live? Bereft of my father and brother, I shall enter the fire. I shall not return to the capital, I shall go to Tapovana."

The palace attendants hearing the prince grieving so bitterly, were afflicted and fell to the ground, tormented like bulls whose horns are broken.

Then the excellent and wise Vasishtha, their father's chief priest raising Bharata up, addressed him, saying: " O Prince, thirteen days have passed since the cremation of thy illustrious father's body. Do not delay longer, but collect the bones that remain. Every man suffers the three pairs of opposites; hunger and thirst, pleasure and pain, life and death. Do not permit thyself to grieve for that which cannot be avoided."

Then the wise Sumantra raised up Shatrughna and consoling him explained the nature of birth and death that visits all beings. Standing erect, those two lions among men, their eyes red with much weeping, resembled the standards of Indra, bereft of glory by the effects of sun and rain. Then the counsellors approached the two princes and requested them to undertake the remaining ceremonies.

CHAPTER 78

The hunchback, Manthara, incurs Prince Shatrughna's displeasure

As Bharata, still grieving, was considering how he should approach Shri Rama in the forest, Prince Shatrughna spoke: "O Brother, how is it that Shri Rama, the support of all beings in distress and who is powerful, has been banished to the forest with his consort? Even if Shri Rama were bewildered, why did the mighty and courageous Lakshmana not defend him and restrain his father? The king, falling under the sway of desire, forsook the precepts of justice, Prince Lakshmana who was acquainted with what was right, should have restrained the king from this sinful act."

While Prince Shatrughna was conversing thus with Bharata, the hunchback Manthara, attired in costly garments, adorned with precious gems, appeared at the east door. Painted thickly with sandalwood paste, wearing a robe and ornaments befitting a queen, bestowed on her by Kaikeyi, her waist encircled by a jewelled girdle, her whole body covered with precious stones, she resembled a captive monkey. The guards seeing that wicked and deformed slave, seized her and said to Prince Shatrughna: "This is the sinful wretch who has caused the exile of Shri Rama and the death of the king; deal with her according to thy pleasure."

On hearing the words of the guards, the prince smarting with indignation, reflected on his duty and said to those in the palace: "Let this woman, the cause of the grief of my brothers and the death of my father, suffer the consequence of her acts."

Shatrughna then seized Manthara from amidst her companions with such violence that her shrieks filled the palace! The women, perceiving Shatrughna so enraged, dealing thus with the hunchback, ran away in all directions. They reflected among themselves, saying: "The enraged prince will surely put an end to us all, let us therefore take refuge with the compassionate, liberal and illustrious Queen Kaushalya, she alone will protect us."

Prince Shatrughna, the conqueror of his foes, his eyes red with anger threw Manthara on the ground and forcibly dragged her hither and thither, while all her ornaments were scattered, causing the palace to look like the autumn sky, studded with stars! Dragging Manthara in anger before Queen Kaikeyi, who sought to deliver her, the prince reproached his mother with bitter words. Pained by the harsh speech of Prince Shatrughna, the terrified Kaikeyi fled to Prince Bharata for protection.

Perceiving Shatrughna overcome by anger, Bharata addressed him saying: "O Brother, women are not to be slain by any living being, therefore pardon her and set her free! If women were subject to the law of retribution, and were it not that Rama would forsake me as a matricide, I would have slain this sinful woman long since! If Shri Rama became acquainted with our treatment of this deformed woman, he would never converse more with us."

Thus instructed by Prince Bharata, Shatrughna restrained his wrath and released Manthara, who fell at the feet of Queen Kaikeyi, panting and lamenting. Perceiving Manthara full of fear under Shatrughna's displeasure and trembling like an imprisoned krauncha bird, Kaikeyi gradually calmed her.

CHAPTER 79

Prince Bharata decides to go to the forest and bring back his brother

EARLY on the fourteenth day, the king's ministers being assembled, thus addressed Prince Bharata: "Our Venerable Sovereign, King Dasaratha, having sent his eldest son, Shri Rama and the mighty Prince Lakshmana, into exile, has, himself, joined the circle of the gods. Thou art to-day our Lord, O Mighty Prince. The kingdom is now rulerless and the king bequeathed it to thee, it is not improper for thee, therefore, to ascend the throne, nor will any censure thee on this account.

O Prince of the House of Raghu, all the articles for thy coronation are made ready; thy relatives, counsellors and ministers and the citizens look to thee. O Great Prince, accept the kingdom of thy paternal ancestors and cause thyself to be installed and protect us all."

The Speaker of Truth, the illustrious Bharata, hearing these excellent words, reverently circumambulating the articles designed for the coronation ceremony, replied to those who thus addressed him: "Hear, O My People, it is known to you that according to the tradition of our Royal House the throne is inherited by the eldest son of the deceased sovereign; it is, therefore, improper for you to make this request to me. Shri Rama is my elder brother and, therefore, should be king. I shall enter the forest and reside there during fourteen years in his stead. Now order my whole army to hold itself in readiness, I will go to the forest and bring my brother back, taking with me all the articles necessary for his installation. Rama will there be proclaimed king! I will restore him like the holy fire which is brought to the place of sacrifice. I will never suffer the ambitions of Queen Kaikeyi to be fulfilled. I will enter the forest, hard to penetrate, and shall make Rama king. Let the rough and uneven roads at once be repaired by skilled artisans; let them be followed by mechanics and labourers."

The people were gratified to hear the auspicious words of the prince and replied: "O Prince, may the Goddess of Prosperity[1] ever abide with thee! Desirous of making Rama our king, thy words are timely."

Then all present experienced great joy and shed tears of delight. The happy courtiers, ministers and servants spoke cheerfully, saying: "O Chief of Men, at thy command we are summoning the workmen to prepare the way."

[1] Shri Lakshmi, consort of Shri Vishnu.

CHAPTER 80

A royal highway is constructed for the prince

NOW, commanded by Prince Bharata, water diviners, expert and industrious mechanics, builders of bridges, wheelwrights, men able to perform all kinds of work, woodcutters, artisans skilled in the sinking of wells, labourers, hewers of wood, cooks and those acquainted with the way, set forth. The multitude of people advancing, appeared astonishing, like the sea under the full moon.

Those proficient in various ways, equipped with axes and other implements, advanced in groups, cutting through trees, shrubs, bushes and rocks, levelling them and hewing out a path; planting trees where these were needed, they cut back the branches of others that obstructed the way. Strong men set fire to tree trunks and cleared the road, levelling the uneven places with clay and filling the ditches. Others bridged the small rivers and brooks and swept the road clear of pebbles and thorns, pulverizing the rocks that impeded the flow of water. They speedily built barriers to dam the small streams and deepened the ponds by digging in many places. They also sank wells where water was scarce, and built platforms on which men could rest. Lime was spread on the road, trees were planted where birds sang and the highway appeared as if adorned with banners. Sprinkled with the essence of sandalwood and decorated with flowering branches, it resembled the pathway of the Gods.

Those skilled in building prepared dwellings on pleasant sites near fresh water and fruit trees. Camps were set up for the army in accordance with Prince Bharata's instructions and all that was needed was provided.

Those acquainted with the auspicious planetary positions erected quarters for the illustrious Bharata. Bordered by deep moats with intersecting roads, these camps were as lofty as the blue mountain.

Stately white temples were set up, and rows of houses, bordering the roads, were adorned with flags.

The balconies on the buildings, elevated like dovecotes, resembled the abode of the gods, and the whole arena rivalled Indra's capital.

The way prepared for Prince Bharata, extended to the banks of the Ganges in whose cool waters fishes glided, as it flowed between woods and forests, and that royal highway, erected by skilled artisans, appeared as beautiful as the night sky, adorned by moon and stars.

CHAPTER 81

Vasishtha summons the royal assembly

YET a little of the enchanting night still remained, when the bards began to praise the prince; three hours before the sun rose, the great drums were struck with golden sticks, while conches were blown and the sound of countless musical instruments was heard.

The music filling the heavens increased the grief of Prince Bharata, who commanded it to cease, saying: "I am not the king." Then addressing Prince Shatrughna, he said: "Hear, O Brother, how unfitting are the praises now sung at the instance of Queen Kaikeyi. She has done us a great wrong. The king has departed to the regions of the gods and left me desolate. The future and the kingdom trembling in uncertainty, resembles a ship without a pilot drifting on the ocean. My father is dead and my mother, abandoning the path of virtue, has sent Shri Rama into exile."

The women of the palace, hearing the great prince lamenting, began to weep aloud pitifully. At this time, the great and illustrious Sage Vasishtha, versed in the science of government, appeared in the assembly hall, which was decorated with wrought gold, encrusted with gems. Attended by his followers, the spiritual preceptor of the royal dynasty, entered the council chamber, as Indra enters the celestial hall named Sudharma. Seated on a golden throne, which was covered with an excellent

carpet with the swastika design, Shri Vasishtha said to the messengers: "Go speedily and summon the learned brahmins, the counsellors, the warriors and the leaders of the army; matters of great importance await them! Bring also the royal princes together with their secretaries and ministers, Yudhajita and Sumantra!"

A great tumult now arose from those invited, who approached in chariots and on horses and elephants.

The counsellors seeing Prince Bharata drawing near, were gladdened by his sight as though King Dasaratha himself had entered the assembly.

The presence of Bharata added to the splendour of the court so that it appeared as when King Dasaratha was present, or as the clear waters of the ocean are enhanced by whales, alligators, shells and golden sand.

CHAPTER 82

The chiefs of the army prepare for departure

THE wise Bharata beheld the royal assembly presided over by the great Vasishtha and other venerable sages, resembling the night made glorious by the full moon. Illumined by these excellent ones, who occupied their seats, attired in splendid apparel, the conclave was of incomparable brilliance. The assembly of learned men resembled the beauty of the full moon on a winter's night.

The virtuous priest, Shri Vasishtha, beholding all the ministers and the chief counsellors, gently addressed Bharata, saying: "O Child, King Dasaratha, having practised virtue in his life, has bequeathed this rich and prosperous land to thee. Shri Ramachandra observing the vow of truth, in obedience to his father and in conformity with the duty incumbent on him, to vindicate his parents, has not failed to accomplish his father's command, as the moon does not abstain from shedding abroad its radiance. Now enjoy the possession of this peaceful kingdom

given to thee by thy father and brother! To please thy counsellors, cause thyself to be installed. The kings of the north, south and west, the peers and titular sovereigns of the western boundary and the monarchs of many islands, will bring thee countless gems as offerings."

Hearing the words of his spiritual preceptor, Prince Bharata was distressed, knowing well that according to the ancient tradition of his dynasty, the eldest son inherits the kingdom. Calling Rama to remembrance, Shri Bharata resolved to seek out his elder brother. The throat of the youthful prince was choked and in tones resembling the cry of the swan, he plaintively reproached the venerable Guru for the impropriety of his command.

Bharata said: "O Holy Lord, how can I usurp the legitimate possession of one, who, learned in the Vedas and sciences, acquired by dwelling as a servant in the house of his Guru, knows their meaning well and follows them in practice? How can one, born of King Dasaratha, striving to fulfil the law of dharma, take possession of the kingdom of Rama? Not only does the kingdom belong to Rama, but I also belong to him. O Holy One, may thy counsels accord with righteousness; King Dasaratha owned this kingdom as did King Dilipa and Nahusha before him, so should the virtuous Prince Rama, the eldest and most excellent son, inherit the kingdom!

"If, as instructed by thee, I accept it, it would be a great sin and worthy of an evil-doer, not in accordance with the way that leads to heaven and I should be adjudged the destroyer of the House of Ikshwaku. I abhor the wrong committed by my mother, and I offer salutations to Rama residing in the forest; I will follow him, he alone is king and worthy of ruling the three worlds! It were easy for him to administer this kingdom."

All seated in the assembly, devoted to Rama, having listened to the righteous words of Bharata, shed tears of joy. Once again Shri Bharata spoke, saying: "If I fail to bring back Shri Rama then I will dwell there with him in the forest as Lakshmana has done. O Ye Wise Men, accompany me to the forest and with your good help, I will try every means to persuade him to return; skilled excavators, engineers and carpenters have been sent forward by me to render the road passable."

The lover of his brother, Shri Bharata, turning to the royal counsellors, addressed the wise Sumantra seated near them and said: " Go speedily and summon the army in my name to accompany me to the forest and bring the leaders here."

Sumantra gladly carried out the commands of Prince Bharata. The military commanders were filled with joy at the order of Prince Bharata to proceed with the army to recall Shri Rama. In every home, wives joyfully urged their husbands to go with all speed and bring back Shri Rama.

The leaders of the army riding their swift horses or in bullock carts and chariots gave the order to march. His preceptor the Guru Vasishtha being near, Shri Bharata said to Sumantra who was at his side, "Speedily prepare my chariot". Sumantra replied with reverence " Be it so " and highly pleased brought the chariot to which excellent horses were yoked. The Prince, filled with fortitude, illustrious, of fixed vows and a hero of the region of truth, resolving to recall Shri Rama from the forest, addressed Sumantra saying: " O Sumantra, mobilise the army and order my friends and the chiefs of the people to be prepared. I desire to recall Rama for the good of the world."

As instructed by the great prince, Sumantra speedily issued the command to the chiefs of the army and the friends of Bharata, fully explaining its purpose. In every dwelling the brahmins, the warriors, the merchants and the labourers brought together camels, chariots, mules, elephants and excellent horses.

CHAPTER 83

The whole army reaches the river Ganges

EARLY in the morning, the prince rose and mounting an excellent chariot, set out in haste, desirous of seeing Rama. Shri Bharata's chariot was preceded by ministers on horseback and priests in coaches and shone like the vehicle of the sun. Nine thousand richly bedecked elephants and sixty thousand carts

with archers, together with a hundred thousand troops, accompanied the self-controlled prince, the devotee of truth. Kaikeyi, Sumitra and the renowned Kaushalya riding in resplendent chariots, went forward to bring Rama home. The multitude of the twice born proceeding from the capital, conversed solely of Shri Ramachandra and listened only to that which related to him. They said: " When shall we behold Shri Rama, that cloud-complexioned, mighty armed one, of fixed purpose; the destroyer of the grief of the world? As the rising sun ends the darkness of the earth, so by the mere beholding of Shri Rama will our grief disappear."

Conversing thus of Rama and embracing each other, the citizens went forward, filled with gladness.

The foremost merchants of Ayodhya who had received permission from Bharata to accompany him, also those who had not been so favoured and others, went forward happily to meet Rama. Skilful engravers, potters, weavers and workers in gems, those who made fans of peacocks' feathers, woodcutters, plasterers, workers in glass and ivory, masons and perfumers, famous goldsmiths, makers of woollen cloth, washermen, masseurs, appliers of unguents, physicians and those who fumigated the dwellings with incense, also retailers of wine were present. Fullers, tailors, chiefs of villages, cowherds, dancing men and women, fishermen, and countless Vedic scholars of subdued mind, devoted to Rama, followed Prince Bharata in carts drawn by bullocks. All apparelled in pure raiment, their bodies anointed with red sandalwood, mounted on vehicles of various kinds, followed in the wake of Prince Bharata. The leaders of the army joyfully accompanied the prince, now going forth to bring Prince Rama home.

Mounted in chariots, palanquins, bullock carts or on horses and elephants, the people proceeded a considerable distance and reached the banks of the Ganges at Shrangaverapur, where the friend of Shri Rama, Guha, dwelt with his people, guarding his country with vigilance. Arriving at the banks of Shri Gunga, the haunt of the chakravaka[1] bird, those following the prince halted. The eloquent Bharata, seeing the beautiful Ganges, reviewed his troops and said to his ministers:—

[1] Chakravaka bird—Brahmany duck.

"Let the whole army camp here to-night, to-morrow we will cross the river. Now I desire to offer a libation to the spirit of my father, the king!"

His counsellors replied, "Be it so, O Prince", and caused the people to halt there, each according to his rank. The saintly Bharata alone in his tent, on the banks of the Ganges reflected anxiously how he might best bring Shri Rama home.

CHAPTER 84

Guha, chief of the ferrymen, is filled with apprehension

OBSERVING the great army of Bharata encamped on the river bank, Guha was filled with apprehension, and said to his followers: "My Friends, this great army which is occupying the river banks, is not to be numbered even in imagination. Assuredly Prince Bharata has come here with evil intent, since the flag of his dynasty flies over his tent. Either he is come to bind and destroy me, or he is going to slay Rama who is exiled by his father, and helpless! Perchance the son of Kaikeyi desires to slay Rama in order to gain complete possession of the kingdom. But Rama, the son of Dasaratha, is my Lord, my Supporter and my Friend, I command you, therefore, to don your armour and take up arms, lining the banks of the Ganges for the protection of Rama. Let my servants and the troops living on fruit, roots and flesh guard the ferry boats of the Ganges. Let five hundred boats be manned with their crews, and let each be guarded by youthful watermen well armed and accoutred. See that they are vigilant. If Prince Bharata be well disposed towards Rama, his army may cross the Ganges to-day."

Thus, mobilising his troops and servants, Guha the chief of ferrymen, taking gifts of fish, flesh and honey, went to meet Prince Bharata. Seeing Guha approaching, the excellent Sumantra said to Bharata: "This Guha attended by a thousand kinsmen is the king of this place, he is a native of these parts

and is fully acquainted with the forest, he is a friend of thy brother, Shri Rama. Therefore, O Prince, let him be admitted in audience to thee, he assuredly knows the place where Rama and Lakshmana dwell."

Hearing the words of the sagacious Sumantra, Bharata said: "Go and tell Guha that I desire to meet him."

The sanction of Prince Bharata being given, Guha with the chiefs of his people approached the prince and thus addressed him: "O Lord, consider this country as thine own domain; not being acquainted with thine intention, I am unable to offer thee a fitting welcome. This inconsiderable kingdom is thine and we also are thine! We entreat thee to abide in thy servant's house. I have brought roots, fruits and flesh both fresh and dried for thee and other products of the forest for thy use. It is my hope that thine army remain here to-night as my guests; may we have occasion to serve thee, O Prince; to-morrow thou canst go forward with thine army."

CHAPTER 85

He is filled with joy on hearing of Prince Bharata's intention

The wise Bharata listened to the words of the chief of ferrymen and revealed his purpose to him, stating his reasons thus: "O Friend of my elder brother, thy hospitality is great, since thou desirest to entertain so great an army as accompanies me."

Prince Bharata then addressed Guha once more in gentle and well-chosen words, and said: "O Chief of the Nishadas, by what way shall I proceed to the hermitage of the Sage Bharadwaja? The valley of the Ganges being flooded is difficult to cross."

Guha, acquainted with all the paths and inaccessible parts of the forest, replied with great humility: "O Illustrious Prince, have no anxiety! These, my kinsmen, armed with bows and arrows, fully acquainted with the forest, shall accompany thee, and I also shall follow thee in person. But observing thy great

army, I am filled with apprehension. Art thou going to approach Rama, urged by some evil intent?"

Shri Bharata, whose heart was pure as the stainless heavens, answered him in sweet accents, saying: "O Guha! May the time never come when I cause him distress. Do not look on me with fear O Friend; Rama, my elder brother, is to me equal to my father himself! O Guha, I go to bring back Shri Rama from the forest. Do not impute any evil motive to me! O Friend, this is the truth and the truth alone."

Guha was filled with joy on hearing the words of Prince Bharata and again addressed him saying: "O Bharata, blessed art thou. In the whole world, I see none equal to thee, since thou desirest to relinquish a great empire that has fallen to thee without any effort of thine own. Thy fame in the world will live forever, since thou, suffering distress, didst go forth to bring back Shri Rama."

While Prince Bharata and Guha were thus conversing, the sun set and the night drew on. Gratified with the converse and hospitality of Guha, his army fully refreshed, Shri Bharata entered his tent to rest. But the prince, whose heart formerly had been unacquainted with grief and who was patient and free from sin, which is the chief cause of suffering, was yet overcome by pain on account of Rama. Sorrow for Raghava consumed him inwardly, as a fire consumes a withered and hollow tree in the forest. The perspiration caused by the fire of grief ran down his body, as the snow flows from the Himalayan peaks melting under the heat of the sun.

By the mountain, the peak of which was sorrow, the recollection of Rama the rocks, his sighs the mineral charged streams, his desolation the forest, and weariness the promontories, his deep anxiety the wild beasts, his restlessness the herbs, by this mountain of affliction was Shri Bharata overwhelmed.

Assailed by unspeakable anguish, the prince sighed heavily and almost bereft of reason, unconscious of his body, like a bull driven from the herd, was deprived of all rest.

Guha approaching with his friends and kinsmen, embracing Shri Bharata, gently began to reassure him, regarding his elder brother.

CHAPTER 86

Guha tells of Shri Rama's stay by the sacred river

THE dweller in that dense forest, Guha, began to console the virtuous and affectionate prince, whose love for the pious Lakshmana and Shri Ramachandra was unwavering, and said: "O Lord, when the valiant Lakshmana, well armed, was keeping watch over the then sleeping Rama, I said to him, 'O Friend, a soft couch is prepared for thee, sleep thereon at ease, O Prince of Raghu, those dwelling in the forest are accustomed to hardship but thou art worthy of comfort, we will keep guard over Shri Rama this night. O Prince, there is none in the world so dear to us as Rama. Be not anxious, we will keep watch over Shri Rama; do thou rest. By the grace of Rama, I hope to acquire great renown and the limitless wealth of dharma in this world. Therefore, O Prince, I will protect my friend, Shri Rama who is reposing with Sita! My kinsmen will keep watch; nothing in the forest is unknown to me, who constantly traverse it; I could challenge a great army with success, should it venture to attack Shri Rama!"

"O Lord, the illustrious Lakshmana, established in virtue, answered me saying: 'O Guha, when the virtuous Rama and Sita are resting on the naked earth, how should I occupy an easy couch? How can any of the comforts of life or life itself be mine if Shri Rama does not also enjoy them? O Guha, behold Shri Rama, capable of subduing the gods and demons, resting on a bed of grass. Through great austerity and penance was Shri Dasaratha blessed with a son, like unto himself. Assuredly, the king will not long survive the exile of Shri Rama, and the land will soon become widowed. The women will lament loudly and then grow silent. I fear lest my Father, Queen Kaushalya and my mother Sumitra will not survive. Perchance my mother will continue to live in expectation of the return of Shatrughna, but Kaushalya, the mother of that great hero will surely die! The king desired to transfer the throne to Prince Bharata, but this ambition will not be realised by him. A great and honourable duty will be fulfilled in performing

the funeral ceremonies for my sire. The capital of the king abounding with beautiful terraces and parks, pleasant highways and tall houses encrusted with gems, crowded with horses, elephants and chariots, resounding with music, furnished with pleasure grounds, where happy and healthy people gather, is blessed by those who walk therein. O Guha, shall we, returning with Rama, the fulfiller of firm vows, when the fourteen years of exile are over, joyfully enter Ayodhya in his company?"

Guha said: "O Prince, thus keeping watch, the mighty Lakshmana, bearing his bow and arrows, passed the night. When the clear sun rose, the two princely brothers, on this selfsame bank of the sacred river caused their beautiful locks to be matted and were then conveyed by me, in safety, over the Ganges.

The royal brothers, heroic, resplendent and the subduers of their enemies, their hair matted, attired in bark, armed with bow and quiver, departed with Sita, looking back at me, like mighty elephants."

CHAPTER 87

How Shri Rama spent his first night of exile

HAVING heard the moving tale related by Guha, Prince Bharata began to reflect on Rama. That tender prince of powerful arms, whose shoulders resembled a lion's and whose eyes were like the lotus, who was patient, youthful and charming in appearance yet sad at heart, at length sank to the ground unconscious, like an elephant stricken to the heart by a goad.

Prince Shatrughna ever in attendance on Bharata, deeply afflicted by his state, embracing his body, wept aloud. Then all the mothers of Prince Bharata, emaciated with fasting and sorrow for their deceased lord, surrounded him, lying unconscious on the earth. The pious Queen Kaushalya approaching, raised Bharata up and pressed him to her breast. The ascetic queen, the lover of her son, straining him to her bosom as if he were

her own child, weeping, enquired of him, saying : " O My Son, art thou afflicted by pain ? The life of this royal family wholly depends on thee ! O Child, Shri Rama has gone to the forest with Lakshmana, I live only if I behold thy face. King Dasaratha being dead, thou alone art the protector of the people. O Child, hast thou heard aught against Lakshmana or my only son, who, with his wife is gone to the forest ? "

The renowned Bharata returning to his normal consciousness, consoled the weeping Kaushalya and then addressed Guha : " O Guha, where did my brother pass the night here ? What did he eat, on what couch did he rest ? Where did Sita and Lakshmana dwell ? "

Guha, the King of Nishadas, gladly related how he had entertained his gracious guest, Shri Rama. He said, " O Bharata, rice, other foods and fruit in abundance were placed by me, before Shri Rama. To please me, that hero of the realm of truth, Shri Ramachandra, accepted the gifts, but recollecting his duty as a kshatriya did not partake of them. He said : " O Friend, we are warriors and it is our duty to give all to others, not accepting any gift for ourselves."

That night, the great-hearted Rama, having with Sita drunk the water brought by Shri Lakshmana, retired to rest, fasting. Shri Lakshmana finishing the water that was left over, all observed silence and performed the evening devotion with concentration. Thereafter the son of Sumitra brought kusha grass and spread it on the earth to serve as a couch for Rama. As Shri Rama and Sita rested there, Shri Lakshmana washed their feet in pure water and then moved to a distance to mount guard over them.

O Prince, here is that Ingudi tree, and here is the couch of grass on which Rama and Sita slept. That hero, Shri Lakshmana with his quiver filled with arrows, bound to his body, donning gloves made of goha-skin, drawing the string of his bow, paced round and round at a distance, guarding the royal pair.

I also, O Prince, surrounded by my kinsmen, armed with an excellent bow, kept watch through the night, protecting Shri Ramachandra, who resembled Indra.

CHAPTER 88

Prince Bharata sleeps on the same spot where Shri Rama had rested

SHRI BHARATA with his counsellors reverently approached the Ingudi tree and looked with love on the grassy couch. He said to his mothers: "This grass was pressed by the royal frame of the illustrious Ramachandra, who passed the first night of exile in this place. It ill became the great and wise son of King Dasaratha to sleep on the bare earth! How could Shri Rama, who ever reposed on a soft couch, sleep on the naked ground? Shri Rama who dwelt in a seven-storied palace, the floors of which were studded with gold and silver flowers, overlaid with soft carpets of many a hue on which marvellous floral designs were woven, the whole fragrant with the perfume of sandalwood and ambergris, and which resembled the clouds; where the cries of parrots and mainas were constantly heard and cool air flowed uninterruptedly through shafts; where the walls inlaid with gold and silver resembled the Meru mountain: in such a palace, Shri Rama was accustomed to rest, awakened each morning by the sweet music of the royal musicians and the gentle tinkling of women's anklets, and duly praised by the bards, panegyrists and ministers, in verse and song. To-day, he sleeps on the naked earth and hears the cry of jackals and other wild beasts. This matter is past belief, it resembles a dream! I consider nothing more powerful than the will of the Lord; how otherwise should the son of King Dasaratha be seen sleeping on the earth? How could the daughter of King Janaka, that beautiful princess, the beloved daughter-in-law of King Dasaratha, sleep on the naked ground?

"O Mother, here is my brother's couch, on it he tossed, crushing the grass by the weight of his limbs. It would seem that Shri Sita rested here also, wearing her ornaments, since I perceive particles of gold lying here and there. O Mother, see Sita's scarf became entangled here, for in this place I see threads of silk! Whether it be hard or soft, the couch of her lord is sweet to a woman! See! The young and tender Sita,

devoted to her husband, experienced no smart, resting here. Oh! I am undone! What a merciless wretch am I! On my account, Shri Ramachandra and his spouse lay on this hard couch! Alas that Shri Rama, deprived of kingly felicity, though born of a royal line, dear to all and the cause of universal joy, whose complexion resembles the blue lotus, whose eyes are slightly red,[1] charming to look upon, not meriting tribulation, should have to sleep on the naked earth.

"Blessed and fortunate is Lakshmana, who followed his brother in the days of adversity! Fruitful is the life of Princess Sita who, thus accompanied her lord to the forest. Wretched are we, bereft of Shri Rama; nor are we certain that he will allow us to serve him. King Dasaratha, being dead, and Shri Rama having entered the forest, the earth appears to me like a boat without a pilot. None desires to usurp the place spiritually reserved for him, who dwells in the forest. To-day the capital is empty and unprotected, horses and elephants wander here and there unconfined, there being none to control them; the gates of the city are left open and unguarded; the army is melancholy and indifferent to the defence of the capital! Ayodhya externally without protection and bereft of purpose, is in a sorry state. Even its enemies turn from it, as men turn away from poisoned food!

"From to-day, assuming an ascetic garb, I will sleep on the earth and live on fruit and roots. I shall live in the forest for the remainder of the term which Rama has to discharge, so that his vow may be fulfilled. My brother Shatrughna shall dwell with me in the forest, while Lakshmana returns with Rama to protect the capital! The learned brahmins will install Shri Rama in Ayodhya! I entreat the gods to fulfil the desire of my heart. If Rama, however, will not grant my request, I will remain in the forest as his servant, but how should he reject my appeal? Is he not compassionate towards his devotees?"

[1] This is said to be one of the marks of a divine Incarnation.

CHAPTER 89

The army crosses the holy river

BHARATA having slept on the same spot where Shri Rama had lately rested, and the night being over, called Shatrughna, and said to him: "Arise, O Brother, may good attend thee! The day has dawned, sleep no more! Please summon Guha, the chief of the Nishadas, so that he may convey our army across the river."

Shatrughna answered: " O Noble One, I am awake. I was not able to sleep, for like thee I have been meditating on Shri Rama!"

As these two, the chiefs of men, stood conversing together, Guha approaching, said with humility: " O Prince, didst thou rest at ease, on the river bank? Did any disturbance visit thee or thine army?"

Hearing these words of Guha uttered with affection, Shri Bharata answered him, saying: " O King, we have passed this night in peace, having been highly honoured by thee. Now let thy servants convey our army over the river."

Guha hastily returned to his city and spake thus to his servants and relatives: " Brothers, arise, awake, may you ever be fortunate! Bring boats to the bank and convey the army over the river!"

Thus addressed, the ferrymen arose and gathering five hundred boats together, brought them to the bank. A special barge that was seaworthy, named " Swastika ", hung with large bells and flying banners with apertures for air, was also furnished, whereon white woollen rugs were spread like carpets, small bells tinkling melodiously when it sailed. This barque was steered by Guha himself. On it stepped the illustrious Princes Bharata and Shatrughna with the Queens Kaushalya and Sumitra, and other ladies of high degree, preceded by their spiritual preceptors, the priests and learned brahmins; finally, the baggage was loaded.

At the time of departure, the noise of those burning the residue left by the army, of those who plunged into the holy Ganges and the porters bearing the baggage, ascended to the sky. The

boats, crowded with attendants, guarded by picked ferrymen, sailing swiftly, conveyed them over the river. Many vessels contained women only, while others were filled with horses or bullocks, carts, cattle and mules.

Reaching the other bank of the river, the people disembarked, the ferrymen and Guha's relatives playing diverse games in the water as they returned. Some of the elephants, resembling mountains as they moved, were driven across by their mahouts, others crossed in boats, some on rafts and some swam. Guha's servants ferried the army over the river, before taking their morning bath. During the period of Maitra, following on the sunrise, the army crossed the sacred stream and entered the charming forest.

Arriving at holy Prayaga, the magnanimous Bharata spoke encouraging words to the army and ordered them to camp at ease. Then the prince accompanied by the Guru Vasishtha and other priests, went to see the Sage Bharadwaja.

Approaching the hermitage of that learned and illumined sage, the son of Brihaspati, they beheld in the dense and delightful forest, charming huts thatched with leaves.

CHAPTER 90

Prince Bharata with Shri Vasishtha visit the Sage Bharadwaja's hermitage

BHARATA, beholding the hermitage of the Sage Bharadwaja, leaving his army a league behind and laying aside his weapons and royal apparel, attired in a simple silken garment, proceeded on foot, preceded by his preceptor. Perceiving the sage himself, he left his counsellors and followed Shri Vasishtha only. The great ascetic Bharadwaja, beholding Prince Bharata approaching, rising from his seat, commanded his disciples to bring the arghya. The muni advancing to greet Shri Vasishtha, Prince Bharata offered salutations to him, the sage recognizing him as the son of King Dasaratha. The Sage Bharadwaja then calling

for the ritual appointments presented them with the arghya, and refreshed them with fruits; he then enquired respecting their welfare and if all were well in Ayodhya. Then he asked concerning the state treasury and the ministers, but, knowing the king to be dead, he made no enquiry concerning him.

In return, Shri Vasishtha and Bharata enquired as to the health of the sage, the state of his body, the sacred fire, his disciples, the deer and the birds. The great ascetic Bharadwaja informed them respecting all these things and then, prompted by the affection he bore for Shri Rama, said to Bharata: " O Prince, what occasion has brought thee hither, who art now the ruler of the kingdom? Tell me all. King Dasaratha, urged by his consort, banished Prince Rama to the forest, for the period of fourteen years. I trust that thou, desirous of enjoying the kingdom without reserve, art not the harbourer of ill-will to thy brother? "

Bitterly wounded by the rishi's words, Prince Bharata, his eyes suffused with tears, his throat choked with emotion, said: " O Lord, thou art all-knowing, if thou dost thus regard me, then my life is vain. I am in no way implicated in the fate of Shri Rama. Such villainy would never proceed from me. O My Lord, why dost thou charge me thus? That which my mother has done, on my account, is not approved by me, nor should I ever condone it. I go to gratify that great prince, by offering salutations to him and with the intention of bringing him back to the capital. O Divine One, this is my purpose, be pleased to tell me where Rama, now the lord of the earth, is to be found? "

Requested likewise by Shri Vasishtha and the other priests, Shri Bharadwaja, captivated by the words of Bharata, answered: " O Great One, thou art born in the illustrious family of Raghu, and it is therefore not a source of wonder that dutiful regard for thy preceptor, self-control and the following of the path of the wise, are all united in thee! By my yogic powers, the contents of thy heart were known to me, but I questioned thee, that thy resolution might be established, and thy fame proclaimed throughout the whole world. It is known to me where Shri Rama and Lakshmana conversant with righteousness, abide. They dwell on the great mountain Chittrakuta; do thou go

thither to-morrow. To-day, stay here with thy counsellors. O Wise One, do thou accede to my request."

Then Bharata, the prince of great renown, accepted the offer of the sage and remained all that night at his hermitage.

CHAPTER 91

Sage Bharadwaja entertains the whole army

PRINCE BHARATA, having decided to remain in the hermitage, the sage invited him to a repast. Shri Bharata said: " O Holy Lord, thou hast already entertained me with water, fruit and berries, I am wholly satisfied."

Shri Bharadwaja smilingly answered: " I know thee to be pleased with whatever is lovingly offered to thee, but, O Prince, I desire to entertain thy whole army, it is meet that thou accede to my request. O Great Prince, why art thou come, leaving thine army at a distance? Why didst thou come unattended by thine army?"

Hearing these words, Prince Bharata answered with humility: " O Lord, I did not come attended by mine army, in deference to thee. It becomes a king or a king's son to protect the hermitages of his kingdom! O Lord! I am accompanied by many horses and wild elephants occupying a vast area. Fearing lest they should destroy the trees, the thatched huts and defile the water of the ponds and wells, I came alone, leaving them behind."

Then the Maharishi Bharadwaja said: " Bring thine army hither."

Thus commanded, the prince brought his army thither. Entering the sacrificial pavilion, the rishi drank three times of the water there, and reciting a certain formula, sprinkled some on his body. Then invoking Vishwakarma[1] to provide the entertainment, and speaking slowly, he said: " I summon the celestial beings, Vishwakarma and Twashta, let them prepare

[1] Vishwakarma—the architect of the gods.

dwellings for the army. I desire to offer Prince Bharata hospitality, I therefore call upon the deities Yama, Varuna, Kuvera and also Indra. Let them assist me in providing the entertainment. I also summon all the rivers, flowing above or below from east to west and from west to east. Let some of these produce the delicious wine named Maireya[1] and that named Saura,[2] and also cool, sweet water, like the juice of the sugar cane. I summon further the heavenly musicians called Haha and Huhu, together with other divine beings and nymphs. I summon the dancing apsaras, Ghritachi, Vishwachi, Mishrakeshi, Alambusha, Nagadanta, Hema and Soma, who dwell in the Himalayas. I call on the dancing nymphs attendant on Brahma and Indra; let them attire themselves in beautiful apparel, bringing their instruments. I desire the celestial forest Chaitraratha to appear here, the leaves of whose trees are formed like beautiful damsels. I desire further foods of many kinds that can be chewed, sucked or licked, and various drinks to be prepared by the deity presiding over the moon. Let garlands of fresh flowers be made ready and beautiful goblets and different dishes of flesh be produced here instantaneously!"

By his yogic power and the proper recitation of the sacred mantras, the holy Sage Bharadwaja produced all that was necessary. Facing the east in the posture of invitation, Shri Bharadwaja sat in meditation for a space. Then, one by one, the gods appeared before him. The cool, slow and fragrant breezes blowing from the Malaya and Dadura mountains, tempered the heat. The clouds rained down flowers and the sound of the divine dundubhis (drums) was heard; delightful zephyrs began to blow, nymphs danced, the celestial musicians sang and the notes of the vina were heard everywhere. The earth and the sky were filled with sweet and harmonious sounds, heard by all living beings. As the divine music continued, Bharata's army beheld the wonderful structure wrought by Vishwakarma. They perceived the whole area within a radius of four miles, to be covered with a carpet of green and glistening grass sparkling like a green emerald. Its beauty was enhanced

[1] Maireya or Mireya—A kind of intoxicating liquor made of the blossoms of Lythrum Fructicosum with sugar.
[2] Saura—a celestial drink, "Saura" meaning "relating" to the sun.

by silwa,[1] kapitha,[1] amlaki[1] and mango trees. A wood appeared wherein people could wander, also a divine stream flowing between banks adorned by various trees. Beautiful white mansions were erected, with stables for elephants and horses. Palaces with their balconies decorated with leaves and flowers were to be seen, and others adorned with green and flowery sprays and garlands of pure white blossoms sprinkled with scented water. These dwellings contained square courts serving as reception halls with space for palanquins, and coaches. Food of all kinds, rice, the juice of sugar cane and every variety of confection was to be found there, with curry puffs, pancakes and other delicious dishes served in clean vessels, while excellent carpets and seats were spread for relaxation, and couches with spotless coverings and quilts.

Entering these mansions with the permission of the Sage Bharadwaja, Prince Bharata was followed by his servants, ministers and priests who, perceiving all to be well furnished, were highly gratified.

In one of the mansions, a room was set apart containing a throne where retainers holding the canopy and chamara were in attendance. Bharata with his ministers, circumambulated the royal dais as if it were occupied by Shri Rama and bowing to it respectfully, Shri Bharata, holding the chamara, occupied a lower seat, the counsellors, priests and army commanders assuming positions in accordance with their respective rank.

Now, at the command of the holy sage, streams of milk, thickened with rice, flowed before Bharata's eyes. Beautiful houses, washed with quicklime, appeared on the river banks. Twenty thousand youthful women, enchantingly attired and wearing beautiful ornaments came there at the instance of Brahma. Kuvera also sent twenty thousand lovely damsels adorned with gold, gems and pearls. Further twenty thousand nymphs from the region of Indra appeared, whose beauty caused men to lose their reason. Narada, Gopha and other brilliant musicians began to sing and play before Bharata, and the celestial nymphs to dance in the presence of the prince, at the rishi's command. All the flowers most highly esteemed in the celestial gardens among the gods, were seen at Prayaga, through the power

[1] For plants and trees, see separate glossary.

of Bharadwaja. The trees applauded, the bahadur tree performed on the cymbals and the pipal danced, through the influence of the sage, and those named devaparna, tala and kuraka assumed the form of dwarfs! Plants by the name of shingsapa, amalaki and jambu, and twining creepers such as the jasmine and mallika, taking on the shape of women in the hermitage of Bharadwaja, cried out: " O Wine-Bibbers, drink! O Hungry Ones, eat kheeva! Come, fill yourselves with the various kinds of meat! "

Each person was bathed in the cool river and attended by seven or eight beautiful maidens with lustrous eyes, who massaged their body with oil and unguents. Their bath completed, many women dried them with soft cloths and gave them sweetened water, tasting like ambrosia, to drink.

The keepers attended carefully to the horses, elephants, mules, camels and bullocks. Those steeds belonging to the royal stables and ridden by great generals, were fed by the grooms on bundles of sugar cane and parched and sweetened rice, their attendants and mahouts could hardly recognize their charges. The soldiery were now intoxicated with wine and indulging in every pleasure! Each was gratified in whatever he desired; their bodies anointed with sandalwood paste and united with the nymphs in amorous dalliance, they exclaimed: " We will neither go to Ayodhya nor enter the Dandaka forest! Let Bharata live at ease and Shri Rama dwell in the forest! "

Thus did the warriors and grooms express themselves in the state of inebriation, while thousands of soldiers, in exultation, shouted aloud: " Verily, this is heaven! " Running hither and thither with garlands round their necks, innumerable soldiers danced, sang and laughed. Though they had partaken to the full of excellent dishes, sweet as nectar, yet when they perceived fresh articles of food, they could not restrain themselves from eating anew!

Thousands of messengers, servants and the wives of the soldiery, putting on colourful raiment, displayed themselves with pride. Elephants, horses, camels, deer and birds were fully satisfied; none wanted for anything! No one, in the army of Bharata, was seen in soiled garments or hungry or

unkempt, none was seen with an unclean countenance or uncombed hair!

The men beheld countless dishes of mutton, pork, venison and other meats cooked in fruit-juices and fried in butter with cloves, caraway seeds and lentils simmering gently in them. Thousands of vessels were filled with spiced rice, garnished with flowers and flags. All were speechless with wonder on beholding them! Within a radius of five miles, the wells were filled with frumenty (kheeva) and cows like Kamadhenu fulfilled every desire! The trees dripped honey and the lakes were filled with the sparkling wine Maireya, and banked with dressed viands such as deer, chickens and peacocks. Hundreds and thousands of dishes were provided, and myriads of vessels filled with curds, mixed with caraway seeds, ginger and other fragrant spices, were served there. Lakes of yoghourt and milk, together with heaps of sugar, were to be seen on the river banks, as also fragrant crushed leaves and unguents with large pots of sandalwood paste, mirrors and towels! An abundance of sandals and shoes were provided, whilst antimony, combs, brushes, parasols, bows and quivers, armour and ornamental seats were placed here and there! Tanks, full of liquid mixed with herbs to promote digestion, were taken to the banks of lakes where descent was easy, and where the people could bathe freely and drink when they pleased! These lakes were filled with pure water, abounding in lotuses and fringed with tender grass of blue and emerald hue; here, resting places for the beasts were also to be found.

Prince Bharata's companions were astounded at the entertainment provided by the Maharishi Bharadwaja. All passed the night in amusement, as in the garden of Indra!

At dawn, the rivers, celestial musicians and nymphs took leave of the maharishi and returned to their own abode. But Prince Bharata's followers were still flushed and inebriated, their bodies painted with sandalwood, the flower garlands in heaps like mountains, lying everywhere, scattered and trampled on by men and beasts.

CHAPTER 92

Prince Bharata with the army departs for Mount Chittrakuta

PRINCE BHARATA, having passed the night in enjoyment of the entertainment provided, early in the morning, desirous of seeing Rama, approached the muni.

With joined palms, he stood before the holy rishi who was engaged in the fire ritual.

The Sage Bharadwaja enquired of him, saying: "O Sinless Prince, didst thou pass the night in my hermitage in peace? Are all satisfied with the meagre entertainment provided by me?"

Shri Bharata, offering salutations to the maharishi, who had come out from his hermitage replied: "O Blessed Lord, I and my whole army have been rendered completely happy in thy hermitage, thou hast fully satisfied us all. My people have passed the night agreeably, they have slept in excellent houses and partaken of delicious dishes, and have lost all sense of the fatigue caused by the journey. O Great Sage, now allow me to take leave of thee and go to my brother; look on me with favour, I beg of thee. O Wise One, how far from here is the hermitage of the pious Rama and which is the way thither?"

The sage, eminent in ascetic practices, replied to Bharata, who desired to see his brother: "O Prince, at ten miles' distance from here, in a field full of boulders, is the beautiful mountain named Chittrakuta! To the north of that mountain flows the river Mandakini, winding through flowery forests, its banks planted with blossoming trees. O Friend, close to that river, on the Chittrakuta mountain, thou shalt find thy two brothers dwelling in a thatched hut. O Fortunate Prince, on the southern bank of the Yamuna, thou wilt see two paths, do thou take the right path with thine army, horses and elephants! This path will take thee to Shri Rama."

At the moment of departure the consorts of King Dasaratha, descending from their chariots, came to the place where the great sage was and stood encircling him. Among them the frail

and trembling Kaushalya and Sumitra touched the feet of the holy man. Then Kaikeyi, thwarted in her designs and despised by the whole world, touched the feet of the sage and circumambulated him. Grief-stricken, she stood at a little distance from Bharata, as the holy Bharadwaja addressed the prince, saying: " O Prince, I desire to be acquainted with thy mothers."

The ever eloquent Bharata answered humbly: " O Holy Lord, here is my father's chief queen, wretched and weakened through fasting, yet resembling a goddess. She is the mother of that Lion among men, the highly intrepid Prince Rama! Comparable to Aditi who brought forth Prajapati, she has given birth to Raghava! She, who leaning on her arm, stands with a sorrowful heart, like the branch of the karnikara tree stripped of its flowers, is the Queen Sumitra, the mother of those heroes of truth, Shri Lakshmana and Shatrughna. O Great Sage, she who has brought great affliction on these two chiefs of men and caused the death of King Dasaratha by separating him from his sons, who is given to anger and who is vain and shallow, esteeming herself favoured, who is highly ambitious and fickle and yet looks upon herself as free from imperfection, that cruel and wicked Kaikeyi, is my mother! O Great Muni, it is she who has caused my great misfortune!"

Unable to utter further, his throat choked with emotion, the prince began to sigh heavily, his eyes inflamed, breathing like a provoked serpent. Then the holy sage, acquainted with what should come to pass, answered saying: " My Son, do not reproach Queen Kaikeyi, the exile of Shri Rama will be productive of great good and the gods and danavas and the illustrious sages will gain great benefit from the presence of Shri Rama in the forest!"

Hearing this, Bharata bowed low to the rishi and receiving his blessing, circumambulated him with reverence. Then craving permission from the sage to depart, he ordered his army to prepare to march.

The leaders of the forces mounted their horses, while others, ascending golden chariots, started on their journey. Elephants with howdahs fixed by golden chains and adorned with fluttering flags went forward, the bells hanging from the male and female tuskers causing a sound like the thunder of the clouds at the end

of the rainy season! The other vehicles large and small, conveying members of the royal family advanced also.

Shri Bharata, intent on seeing Rama, riding in a resplendent palanquin shining like the sun or moon, with his great army, moved towards the south, covering the earth like a vast cloud.

The horses and elephants were all contented and the vast concourse inspiring the wild deer and birds with terror, looked splendid as it entered the deep forest.

CHAPTER 93

They behold the hermitage of Shri Rama

As the mighty army traversed the forest, the leaders of the herds of wild elephants with their companions, ran away in alarm. Bears, leopards and other fierce beasts could be seen fleeing on the hilltops and by the banks of the river.

Supremely gratified, Prince Bharata proceeded in the midst of his soldiers who shouted as they marched. The army of the illustrious Bharata, resembled an ocean, whose waves spread over the earth or like the clouds covering the sky during the rainy season. The ground for miles was covered with elephants and horses, so that no trace of it could be seen.

Having marched a considerable distance, Shri Bharata, perceiving his animals to be fatigued, addressed the holy priest, Shri Vasishtha, saying: "This country appears to be as beautiful as described to me, I deem that we have reached that place spoken of by the Sage Bharadwaja. This mountain is Chittrakuta, and this is the Mandakini river, and this is the forest which, from a distance, resembled a blue cloud. These are the glorious peaks of Chittrakuta, which are being trodden by my great elephants! See, O Holy Guru, as the dark clouds pour down water in the rainy season, so do the elephants, whose trunks are scarred by the waving branches of the trees, scatter flowers on the hills.

"O Shatrughna, behold the lovely Chittrakuta mountain

sought after by the gods; everywhere herds of deer wander about enhancing its beauty, like crocodiles swimming gracefully in the sea. As clouds driven by the wind in winter adorn the sky, so do these deer running before the army, render the forest delightful.

"Our soldiers decorating their heads with flowers, resemble the people of the south who crown themselves with blossoms. See, O Shatrughna, the forest that appeared terrifying and seemed to breathe by being filled with men, resembles Ayodhya itself!

"The dust rising from the hoofs of the bullocks covers the sky and settles there, till the wind quickly dispels it, as if those things obstructing my vision of Shri Rama were being removed from my eyes. O Shatrughna, behold these horses yoked to the chariots with their charioteers, swiftly passing through the forest! And see those beautiful peacocks with long feathers, running in fear towards their habitation on the mountain. O Sinless Brother, this place appears enchanting to me and a fit abode for ascetics.

"How lovely are the spotted deer wandering about with their hinds; they appear as if studded with flowers. Let my leaders go forward and seek out the place where Shri Rama and Lakshmana dwell."

Hearing the words of Shri Bharata, the warriors bearing weapons in their hands, entered the forest and there perceived a spot where smoke was ascending. On beholding this, they returned to Prince Bharata and communicated to him their belief, that the two royal brothers dwelt where the smoke arose. They said: "If it be not Shri Rama and Lakshmana yonder, then surely it is some devotee who can inform us concerning the dwelling place of Raghava!"

Hearing this pleasing report, Shri Bharata addressed the leaders of the army saying: "Do you remain here, do not proceed further, I, with the holy Guru Vasishtha and Sumantra will go forward to that place."

Thus commanded the warriors halted and Shri Bharata looked towards the spot where the smoke was visible. Observing the smoke, the warriors, waiting at that place, rejoiced, believing the time for the meeting with Shri Rama was at hand.

CHAPTER 94

Shri Rama decides to spend his exile on the mountain

SHRI RAMA who had passed many days on that mountain, gratified Shri Sita by showing her many scenes of natural beauty, they themselves appearing as lovely as Indra and his consort.

Shri Rama said: " O Fortunate One, beholding the beauty of this pleasant mountain, no longer does the separation from my friends or my country cause me pain ! O Centre of Delight ! behold the loveliness of these peaks abounding in metals of various kinds, reaching the skies and frequented by birds of every species ! These peaks, some of which shine like silver, some of which are ruddy, some yellow, some glittering with the splendour of the brilliant gems concealed in them ; some sparkling with sapphire and crystal, and some resembling quicksilver and glittering like the stars ! Though many lions and leopards abound in the forest, yet influenced by the pure nature of the ascetics dwelling here, they have ceased to follow their cruel instincts. Many varieties of birds have their nests on yonder hill, trees laden with fruit and flowers affording delightful shade, render the mountain enchanting !

" Here are mango, jambu, asana, lohdra, piyala, panasa, dhuva, ankotha, bhavya, tinisha, bilwa, tindura, bamboo, kasanari, arista, varana, madhuca, tilaka, vadari, amlaka, nipa, vetra, dhanwaria, vijaka and other trees.

" O Auspicious Princess, behold the ravishing loveliness of these hills where the wise kinneras wander in pairs, their swords and coloured apparel hanging on the branches. See the charming retreats of the vidya dharas[1] and their companions. These mountains with their cascades and bubbling springs appear like mighty elephants the ichor flowing from their foreheads.

" What mind would not be filled with delight by the breezes issuing from the caves of the mountain, redolent with fragrance, pleasing to the senses ? O Peerless One, if it be for me to

[1] Vidya Dharas—" Possessors of Knowledge ", a class of deities attendan on Indra.

dwell here with thee and Lakshmana for innumerable years, no grief or anxiety will visit me. O Lovely Lady, on the mountain of Chittrakuta, rendered pleasant by a profusion of flowers and fruits, whose delightful peaks echo with the sweet song of birds, I am content to dwell! By residing here, two objects have been achieved, the fulfilment of my father's vow and the satisfaction of Prince Bharata. O Daughter of King Videha, behold this enchanting spot where self-control and asceticism are easily exercised. Say, art thou happy here? The discipline of residence in the forest is declared by royal sages to be a means to liberation. Our ancestors such as Manu have held that residence in the forest is the means of acquiring the form of the gods. Behold, O Princess, yonder mountain, adorned by thousands of rocks blue, yellow, purple and white. At night, the healing herbs shine like fire, lighting the crags with their radiance. See, O Princess, some of the caves resemble houses, some appear like flower gardens, all enhancing the glory of the mountain. It would seem that Chittrakuta has sprung forth from the earth and from every side appears incomparably beautiful. Observe, O Auspicious One, how those devoted to pleasure, have spread couches here and there, and covered them with azure lotuses overlaid with coverings of bark. See the faded garlands cast aside by them and the rinds of many fruits of which they have partaken.

"This mountain Chittrakuta, in variety of flowers and transparent waters, has surpassed the capital of Indra in loveliness. O Sita, I will pass the twelve years here with Prince Lakshmana and thee; pursuing the highest virtue and discipline, I shall thus protect my kingdom and earn merit."

CHAPTER 95

He points out the beauties of nature to Sita

HAVING pointed out the beauty of the hills to Sita, Raghava now showed her the pleasant river Mandakini issuing from the mountain. The lotus-eyed Lord addressed the daughter

of King Janaka, whose countenance resembled the moon, saying: "O Princess, behold the river Mandakini with its delightful banks frequented by swans, cranes and other water-fowl, abounding in flowering trees of different kinds, which cause it to resemble the river Sangandhika in the region of Kuvera. Its pleasant fords, where I desire to bathe, the waters of which have been rendered muddy by the herds of deer who have come to drink and recently departed, all these attract the heart. O Dear One, the ascetics attired in robes of bark and deerskin, bathe at stated seasons in this river. O Princess of beautiful eyes, here the munis observing strict and austere vows, stand with uplifted arms, worshipping the sun. The trees agitated by the breeze, cause the hills to appear as if they were dancing. The blossoms scattered by the force of the wind make it seem as if Chittrakuta were offering flowers to the river. O Auspicious One, here the waters of Mandakini sparkle like gems and there they form a sandy beach. Groups of perfect beings frequent the banks. O Princess, behold the heaps of flowers shaken down from the branches by the wind, and others floating through the air and falling into the river to be carried away by the water. O Kalyani, behold the wild geese standing in the shallows, uttering sweet cries to summon their mates or diverting themselves with them. O Lovely Sita, when I behold the Chittrakuta mountain and the river Mandakini in company with thee, I esteem it a greater joy than any Ayodhya could yield me. Come, O Sita, and let us two bathe in the river Mandakini, frequented by perfect beings who are endowed with inner and outer control and are devoted to the practice of austerity. O Princess, thou didst formerly play with thy maids of honour in Ayodhya, to-day amuse thyself with me in the Mandakini river, pelting me with red and white lotuses and splashing the waters over me. O Dear One, imagine those dwelling here to be the citizens of Ayodhya and the Mandakini to be the river Sarayu. O Sita, I am happy with thee, who art obedient to my command as is also Prince Lakshmana. O Beloved, bathing thrice a day with thee in the river and living on honey, fruits and berries, I feel no desire for the comforts of the kingdom of Ayodhya. Who will not be happy, dwelling on the banks of the river Mandakini, where herds of elephants

wander and lions and monkeys come to quench their thirst, and where flowers grow throughout the year ? "

Thus Shri Rama conversed on many wondrous things concerning the Mandakini river with Sita and taking the hand of the princess, wandered with her over the blue and beautiful Chittrakuta mountain.

CHAPTER 96

They see the army approaching and Lakshmana vows to destroy it

HAVING shown Sita the beauties of the river Mandakini, Rama and Sita seated themselves on a rock. Feasting Videhi[1] with venison, Shri Rama, in order to please her, spoke in this wise: " This meat is pure and is rendered delicious by being roasted in the fire."

While thus conversing with Sita, he observed the dust rising like a cloud, stirred up by the feet of the approaching army of Bharata and heard the tramp of marching warriors at the sound of which the leaders of the elephants with their herds, ran hither and thither in agitation. Seeing the herds of elephants fleeing at the tumult caused by the army, Shri Rama said to Lakshmana: " O Lakshmana, Queen Sumitra is fortunate indeed to be thy mother. Is this warlike clamour issuing from the clouds ? The herds of elephants dwelling in the dense forest, the wild buffaloes and the deer are fleeing away in terror! Has any king or prince come to hunt in the woods, or has some terrible and bloodthirsty beast entered the forest ? Enquire into the matter, O Lakshmana ! Even the birds are not carefree in their flight; it becomes thee to seek out the cause of this commotion."

Speedily climbing a shala tree, Shri Lakshmana looked in all directions. First he examined the eastern quarter, then he looked

[1] Videhi—a name of Sita, as daughter of the King of Videha.

towards the north and there he beheld a vast army composed of elephants, horses, chariots and well-armed infantry !

Describing the approaching army with its elephants, horses, chariots and flags, Shri Lakshmana said to Rama : " O Great One, put out the fire and let Sita enter the cave, do thou arm thyself and take up thy bow and arrow."

Shri Rama answered Lakshmana saying : " O Child, ascertain by the symbols on the flags to whom this army belongs."

The prince listened to Rama's words and burning with anger desirous of consuming the army, replied : " Without doubt, Bharata, having secured the throne has come to slay us both in order to enjoy rulership, unopposed ! See, by that large and beautiful tree is a chariot with a white flag bearing the sign of a pomegranate tree. The soldiers mounted on swift moving horses are coming towards me. I see the riders on elephants also. O Hero, let us both, armed with bows and arrows, climb the hill, or clad in battle array, stand here fully prepared. We shall surely defeat Bharata. To-day, we shall subdue him on whose account all our sufferings have come to pass. O Rama, that Bharata, on whose account, thou, Sita and I, have been deprived of our kingdom and cast into tribulation, is approaching like an enemy. He must certainly be slain, O Prince, I see no sin in destroying him. It were no sin to slay one who seeks to injure thee. O Prince, he has already wronged thee ; by slaying Bharata, thou canst acquire mastery over the whole earth. To-day, Kaikeyi, avid for the kingdom, will see her son slain in the field. Seeing Bharata slain by me, like a tree uprooted by an elephant, Kaikeyi will suffer great anguish ! I shall slay Kaikeyi also, and her friends and Manthara too. O Bestower of Honour, I will free the world of the sinful Kaikeyi ; to-day I will let loose my long restrained wrath on the forces of mine enemy, as a fire consumes dried grass. To-day, I will drench the fields of Chittrakuta with the blood of mine enemies. To-day, those elephants, wounded by my sharp arrows and those men slain by me, will be dragged hither and thither by wild beasts. To-day, I will redeem my vow, by destroying Bharata and his army with my bow and arrow."

CHAPTER 97

Shri Rama cannot believe Prince Bharata comes as an enemy

SEEING Lakshmana overcome with anger and desire for vengeance, Shri Rama sought to pacify him saying: " O Lakshmana, the learned warrior Bharata, fully armed, is coming to see us in person, of what value is shield or sword? What should I do with a kingdom obtained by slaying my brother Bharata, I having undertaken to fulfil my father's behests? I will never accept riches obtained by the slaying of relatives and friends which would be as acceptable to me as food mixed with poison! O Lakshmana, I promise thee, it is for the sake of my brothers that I desire to pursue virtue, legitimately acquired wealth, pleasures, and even the kingdom. O Lakshmana, I speak the truth, by this sign, touching my arms, ' I desire a kingdom only for the sake of supporting my brothers and securing their good '. O Charming Prince! The acquisition of the kingdom is not difficult to me, but O, My Brother, I do not even desire dominion of the celestial region if it can only be acquired by unrighteous means! O Dear One! May the Deity of Fire consume all that gives me joy, if it is not for thy good and to the advantage of Bharata and Shatrughna! It seems to me that when my dearest brother, ever devoted to me, returned to Ayodhya from the home of his maternal uncle, after hearing that we three, robed in bark had entered the forest, he, overwhelmed by affection and grief, set out hither to seek us! I see no other purpose for his advent here. Or it may be that Bharata, wroth with his mother has reproached her with bitter words and has come here to be reconciled with me. It is meet that Bharata should see me and I cannot believe that he comes as an enemy. What harm has Bharata ever done to us, O Brother, that to-day, thou assumest him to be against us? It is improper for thee to speak ill or harshly of Bharata. Those bitter things thou sayest of Bharata, thou hast in fact said of me. O Son of Sumitra, how should a father slay his son, or a brother slay his brother, whatever betide? If thou hast said all this on account of the kingdom, then I will desire Bharata to give thee

the kingdom. O Lakshmana, if I say to Bharata 'Give the crown to Lakshmana', assuredly he will answer 'Be it so'."

Shri Lakshmana was profoundly humiliated by the words of Rama, his limbs and muscles contracted and he was sunk in shame. He said: "It appears that the Maharaja Dasaratha himself has come hither to see us."

Seeing Lakshmana abashed, Shri Rama answered: "I also believe my father is come to see us, and will seek to take us home to the capital, knowing how grievously we suffer in the forest!"

"It may be, too, that the king, knowing Sita to be worthy of every happiness, will take her home. See, O Brother, two excellent horses of noble breed, swift as the wind, appear in view! The great and aged elephant Shatrunjaya that carries my illustrious father, marches before the army, but I feel apprehensive for I do not behold the white umbrella of my renowned Lord! O Lakshmana, descend from the tree."

The prince having descended in obedience to Shri Rama, stood before him with joined palms.

Shri Bharata meanwhile commanded his army not to approach or disturb the hermitage of Rama. The army with its elephants and horses occupied an area of seven miles and the prudent Bharata who, to please Rama, had rid himself of all egoity and employed only virtuous means, caused it to take up its position at some distance from the Chittrakuta mountain.

CHAPTER 98

Prince Bharata goes on foot to meet Shri Rama

THAT exalted one, Shri Bharata, truly obedient to the behests of his Guru, perceiving his army well lodged, proceeded on foot to meet Shri Rama. As soon as the army was encamped, he addressed Shatrughna in these words: "O Excellent One, thou with thy men and a few huntsmen, speedily search the forest and seek out Shri Rama's hermitage. Let Guha attended by a thousand of his warriors, armed with bows, arrows and swords,

search for Shri Rama in the forest. I, myself, in the company of the counsellors, citizens, elders and brahmins, will go on foot through the forest. I shall not rest till I have beheld the saintly Rama, the valiant Lakshmana and the most auspicious Sita. I shall not seek repose till I have looked on the shining countenance of Shri Rama, my elder brother. My mind will taste no peace till I have placed my forehead at the feet of Rama, that bear the marks of royalty. My soul will find no delight till I have placed Shri Rama on the ancestral throne and beheld him anointed with the holy water at the time of his coronation! Fortunate is Prince Lakshmana, who looks on the moon-like, lotus-eyed resplendent face of Rama, each day. Blessed is the daughter of King Janaka, who follows Shri Rama, the Lord of earth and ocean! Blessed also is Chittrakuta, equal to the Himalayas, on which Shri Rama dwells, as Kuvera and Chittraratha dwell in the forest. Blessed is this forest to-day, abounding in poisonous serpents and difficult to penetrate, because the mighty warrior Rama abides in it."

Thus speaking, the valiant Prince Bharata entered the forest on foot. The chief of eloquent persons, the pious Bharata, reached the centre of the forest, where blossoming and fruitful trees adorned the mountain heights. Climbing a shala tree, he saw the smoke rising from the fire in Rama's hermitage. The prince with his friends rejoiced like those who have crossed the ocean, to find the dwelling place of Rama. Finding that Shri Ramachandra dwelt on the mountain frequented by ascetics, Shri Bharata, leaving his army behind, in the company of Guha speedily started for the hermitage.

CHAPTER 99

The four brothers meet with tears of joy

SHRI BHARATA with great eagerness pointed out the indications of the position of Shri Rama's hermitage to his brother Shatrughna. He appealed to Shri Vasishtha to bring his mothers

there speedily, while he, devoted to his elder brother, hastily went on before. Sumantra followed Shatrughna, who walked behind Bharata and who was equally anxious to behold Rama. The prince, proceeding, at length descried the hut thatched with leaves in the midst of the hermitages of the ascetics, and beheld before it a heap of broken wood and flowers plucked for worship. To mark the site of the ashrama, Shri Rama and Lakshmana had bound kusha grass and strips of cloth to the trees. He perceived also great heaps of the dung of deer and buffaloe, dried for fuel, to be used in winter.

The illustrious and mighty Bharata going forward, spoke measured words to his brother and counsellors, saying: "I deem we have reached the place spoken of by the Sage Bharadwaja, and that the river Mandakini is not far distant from here! Prince Lakshmana has bound strips of cloth to the trees, so that when fetching water on a dark night, he may know the way back to the hermitage. This appears to be the road traversed by the great elephants who were roaring in the forest. I perceive the black smoke rising from the ascetics' sacrificial fire. Here, I shall behold that Lion among men, Shri Rama, the great preceptor, seated in majesty, like a resplendent sage."

Proceeding a little further, Prince Bharata reached the river Mandakini on Chittrakuta, and addressing his companions, said: "That chief of men, a very god among living beings, is seated in this lonely forest in the posture of an ascetic. Woe unto me, wretched is my life and birth, on account of which the most resplendent Lord of all, Shri Ramachandra is plunged in this affliction and dwells in the forest deprived of all joy! Despised by men because of this, I will now fall at the feet of Rama and Sita in order to propitiate them."

While still lamenting, Bharata perceived the hut thatched with leaves, pure and pleasant, covered with the leafy boughs of sala, tala and other trees, resembling an altar covered with kusha grass.

Here and there mighty bows and shields covered with gold, wielded in battle, hung, adding to the beauty of the place, and nearby stood a quiver of arrows, bright as the rays of the sun, and keen as the serpents with shining hoods of the Bhagawati

river. There also were two scimitars in scabbards of gold and two shields emblazoned with golden flowers, also many deerskins and gloves with gold embroidered gauntlets. That habitation was impregnable as a cave and unassailable by the herds of wild deer.

Bharata discerned in this dwelling, Shri Rama seated near the altar, resplendent as fire. For a long time, Shri Bharata gazed on the beauty of the scene. He saw Rama sitting, his matted locks coiled on the crown of his head, shining like a flame, his body clad in a robe of bark, covered with the skin of a black antelope, his shoulders resembling a lion's, his arms were long, his eyes like lotuses, that ruler of earth and ocean, the sovereign of eternal decrees! Shri Bharata beheld that righteous one with Lakshmana and Sita, seated on a platform strewn with kusha grass, appearing like the eternal Brahma.

Beholding him seated thus, the pious Bharata was overpowered with sorrow and affection, and ran towards him, his throat choked with grief, weeping and lamenting. Though the pain was past restraining, he yet mastered it and spoke: "Alas! my elder brother, worthy of a seat in the royal assembly, beloved of his counsellors, is to-day associating with wild beasts in the forest. He, deserving of apparel adorned with thousands of golden coins, is sitting, clad in a deerskin, in order to practise the obligations of righteous living. Shri Rama, who was formerly adorned with garlands of different flowers, how can he endure the weight of his matted locks? He, who should have acquired merit by the performance of sacrifices aided by the rishis, to-day increases his meritorious deeds by the practice of austerity. Now is the countenance of my elder brother, formerly adorned with sandal paste, covered with dust! Alas! it is on my account that Shri Rama, who formerly enjoyed every delight, is to-day undergoing this distress. Woe unto me, who am abhored by all."

Thus lamenting, the wretched Bharata, his face bedewed with tears, sought to run and fall at the feet of Rama, but sank unconscious on the way. Deeply afflicted, that great hero, Prince Bharata, cried out: "O Excellent One," and uttered no more. Exclaiming only, "O Noble Sire", he could proceed no further. Shatrughna, also weeping, embraced the feet of

Shri Rama, on which Rama gathering them both in his arms, melted into tears.

Then Sumantra and Guha approached Shri Rama and Lakshmana, and it appeared as if the Sun and Moon, Jupiter and Venus had conjoined in the heavens. The inhabitants of the forest, beholding the four princes met together in their midst, shed tears of joy.

CHAPTER 100

Shri Rama enquires of Prince Bharata concerning the discharge of his royal duties

SHRI RAMACHANDRA saw Bharata lying on the ground, clothed in ascetic's garb, his hair coiled on the crown of his head, his palms joined in supplication, resembling the sun bereft of splendour, fallen to earth, at the time of the dissolution of the world.

Taking hold of the hands of his brother, who was emaciated and weak, Shri Rama raised him up and smelling his head, embraced him, clasping him in his arms and tenderly enquiring of him: "O Child, where is thy father, that thou art come to the forest alone? Had he lived, thou couldst not have come hither unaccompanied! Alas! I grieve that I scarcely recognize my brother, thin, weary and full of care. What brings thee to the forest? O My Brother, is the king well and happy? Or has grief brought about his end? O Darling, thou art yet a child, tell me, is ought amiss in that eternal kingdom? O Hero of Truth, hast thou served the king well? Say, is that Sovereign of men, devoted to truth and to duty, the performer of the great sacrifice, in good health? Is that highly learned monarch, master of the ascetic brahmins, fully cherished? O Child, are Mother Kaushalya and Queen Sumitra, mother of an illustrious son, well? Is that highly exalted Queen Kaushalya, happy? O Friend, dost thou sufficiently regard that humble, experienced, highborn,

magnanimous companion of mine, he who is skilled in action, the son of Shri Vasishtha? Does the royal priest, highly versed in the Veda, who is wise and beneficent, inform thee of the time of sacrifice? O Brother, dost thou offer full reverence to the Gods, father, mother, Guru, thine elders, the physicians and brahmins? O Friend, dost thou give due respect and honour to Sudhama, skilled in the science of arms and conversant with the mantra-driven weapons? Hast thou made those thy counsellors, who are trustworthy, patient, masters of ethics and who have transcended avarice? O Prince, the good fortune of kings is secret consultation with those versed in the spiritual laws. My Son, hast thou overcome sleep? Dost thou awaken betimes? Dost thou in the late hours meditate on the methods of acquiring legitimate wealth? Dost thou reflect alone on matters of moment and consult with thy ministers in public? Do other monarchs know of thy decisions before they are applied? When thou hast determined upon what must and should be done, dost thou speedily accomplish it? Are lesser kings acquainted with thy determined resolve after the event or before thou hast set it in motion? Dost thou prefer the society and advice of a learned pundit to that of countless fools? In times of adversity, it is of infinite advantage to have the proximity of a learned man. If a sovereign surround himself with ten thousand ignorant persons, he will receive no help from them, but should a king be attended by a wise minister, thoughtful, studious, versed in the moral laws and government, he will reap a great advantage. O Brother, dost thou employ men of exalted character in affairs of moment and lesser ones in unimportant events? Dost thou appoint ministers who are pure of heart, full of integrity and of a noble disposition, whose ancestors have served the crown in positions of authority? O Son of Queen Kaikeyi, do the arrogant and proud, when incensed, offer thee or thy ministers insult? As a woman disregards one who has illicit connection with another's wife or the priests condemn that man who has sinned while offering the sacrifice, so is a king despised who levies harsh taxes. That monarch who does not condemn a man to death, who has through avarice and deluded by ambition, accused others who are virtuous, and even threatened the life of the king, is himself

destroyed! O Brother, art thou attended by such persons? Has a commander-in-chief who is active, victorious over his enemies, skilled in arms, patient in adversity, devoted to thee and experienced, been appointed by thee? Hast thou honoured with suitable rewards, those men who are valiant, distinguished, eminent in military sciences, resourceful and whose abilities have been tested? Dost thou distribute remuneration and provisions in a fitting manner when they are due? Servants who are not paid at the proper season, become incensed and disregard their master. Dissatisfied retainers are a source of danger.

"Are the liege warriors and chieftains devoted to thee? In time of need, are they ready to lay down their lives for thy sake? Hast thou appointed, as thine ambassadors, those who are citizens of thy kingdom, who can divine the motives of others, who are of sound judgment, eloquent, and able to overcome their opponents in debate? Dost thou employ three spies, each unacquainted with the other to master the secrets of the fifteen,[1] excluding thy ministers, priests and the heir-apparent? Dost thou set a watch over enemies whom thou hast driven from thy kingdom and yet who have returned? Dost thou deem them harmless? Art thou attended by brahmins of atheistic opinions? Such persons deem themselves wise but, in fact, are fools, yet they may divert others from the path of virtue, being skilled in dispatching souls to the lower regions. They do not study the authorised treatises on the duties of men, but indulge in arguments against the Veda and becoming eminent in useless knowledge, discuss unworthy matters continually.

" O Friend, dost thou carefully preserve the capital Ayodhya, the seat of our ancestors and great men, justly termed 'Invincible' having strong gates and being filled with elephants, horses and chariots, where brahmins engaged in spiritual duties dwell, also warriors and merchants, and superior men who have subdued their senses and are intent on various enterprises; that progressive city which is replete with temples of many

[1] The fifteen are: chamberlains, adjutants, treasurers, master of the rolls, commanders-in-chief, police chiefs, lawyers, magistrates, keepers of the forests and mountains, almoners, gaolers, doorkeepers, superintendents of public works, priests and paymasters.

forms, frequented by learned men. O Brother, ours is a capital which has been the site of many great sacrifices, which contains innumerable temples and lakes, frequented by cheerful men and women, where festive assemblies are held, where no portion of the earth is uncultivated, where elephants, horses and cattle dwell in large numbers, where no one lives in jeopardy, and which is irrigated by artificial means so that people need not depend solely on rain; which is delightful and where no dangerous beasts like lions abound, which is free from wicked men, which improves daily and which is protected by the spirits of our ancestors, tell me is that city prosperous? O Brother, art thou satisfied with the husbandmen and those who live by tending their cattle? Dost thou provide what they need and preserve them from harm? Dost thou ever guard them and provide them with sustenance? O Brother, a king should ever protect his subjects by righteous means. Dost thou propitiate the women of thy realm? Are they duly safeguarded by thee? Dost thou put thy confidence in them? Dost thou communicate thy secrets to them? O Prince, dost thou, well adorned, show thyself to thy people in the assembly hall 'ere noon? Do those who work for thee approach thee with assurance, or do they hold back on account of fear? Both these states are unprofitable. Dost thou treat thy subjects with moderation? Are thy forts well supplied with wealth, food, arms, water, armaments, and furnished with archers and bowmen? O Prince, does thy treasury contain more than is needed for thine expenditure? Is thy wealth spent unprofitably on musicians and dancers? Is a part of thy treasure devoted to the gods, thy sisters, the brahmins, the uninvited guests, warriors and friends? Dost thou condemn any through avarice, without regard for justice or subjecting the offender to closer examination by those eminent in law and who are of good conduct? Are those who serve thee, just men, innocent of lying and theft, and not of ill-repute? O Noble One, those who are apprehended for theft, caught in the act and their guilt established on due examination, are they able to obtain release by bribing the officials? In a dispute between a rich and a poor man, do thy experienced judges carry out justice uninfluenced by a desire for gain? O Prince of Raghu, the tears of those who are unjustly condemned

by a monarch who lives at ease and is indifferent to justice being meted out, destroy his children and his herds ! O Prince, dost thou satisfy the aged, children and physicians by providing them with their needs, treating them with affection and granting them the benefits of wise administration ? Dost thou offer salutations on meeting thy Guru or the aged, the ascetics, strangers, sacred objects, and the brahmins who are learned and enlightened ? Dost thou use the time reserved for the performance of thy duty, for the acquisition of wealth, or dost thou waste the opportunity of fulfilling thy duty and acquiring wealth by partiality to comfort and dissipation ? O Chief of Conquerors, O Knower of the significance of time, dost thou divide thine hours between the observance of thy duty, the acquisition of wealth and legitimate diversion ? O Wise One, do the learned pundits and the citizens pray daily for thy welfare ? O Bharata, dost thou abjure the fourteen failings a sovereign must eschew ? Atheism, dissimulation, anger, inattention, procrastination, neglect of the wise, indolence, surrender of the senses to external objects, disregard of counsel, consulting those who advocate evil, the deferring of that which has been resolved upon, the concealment of counsel received, the abandoning of righteous conduct, the offering of respect equally to the low and high born, and the ruthless conquest of other lands.

" O King, art thou acquainted with the results of the following and dost thou constantly reflect on them ? Hunting, gambling, sleeping during the day, slander, inordinate affection, vanity, concentration on dancing and music, lounging here and there to no purpose ; the five fortifications ; by moat, by high banks, by thickly planted trees, by waste land destitute of means of subsistence and by a waterless region ; the four means to success ; concluding peace, liberality, punishment and sowing dissension in the ranks of the enemy ; the seven requisites of administration : the king, the ministers, government, treasury, territory, army and allies. The kinds of persons with whom one should not contract friendship ; those who speak ill of others, the bold, the curious, the injurious, those who take other's property, the abusive, the ruthless, and the eight objects which should be pursued ; righteousness, acquisition of legitimate

wealth, suitable diversions, the study of the three Vedas, treaty, stratagem, invasion, proper timing, and allying oneself with the powerful?

"Art thou acquainted with the five kinds of suffering caused by celestial beings; by fire, water, disease, famine and plague? Hast thou carefully considered the misfortunes occasioned by officials, thieves, enemies and the king's favourites? Dost thou reflect that it is not proper to be intimate with a child, one who is senile, one who has long been afflicted, one who has been excommunicated, a coward, a terrorist, one who is avaricious or who excites covetousness, one who is despised by others, one who is voluptuous, one who consults everybody, one who speaks ill of the brahmins, one who ascribes all to fate, or who is afflicted by famine, or who wanders from country to country without a purpose, one who has many adversaries, one who does not act at the proper season, one who is not devoted to truth, one who lives under foreign domination and one who is aggressive? Hast thou given the following due consideration and found them to be in accord with thee: thy subjects, women, the kingdom, those who have lost their wealth, thine enemy, thy friend, those unfriendly to thine enemy?

"O Wise One, art thou acquainted with the preparations necessary for a journey, the methods of punishment, the drawing up of treaties, and who is to be trusted or distrusted? O Prince, dost thou enter into consultation with thy counsellors collectively or separately, and dost thou treat each interview as private? Dost thou conclude thy study of the Veda with charitable gifts? Dost thou employ thy wealth in distribution of alms and legitimate diversions? Do thy marriages become fruitful of progeny? Dost thou practise what thou hast learned from the scriptures? Dost thou approve of acts of benevolence, duty, and worship and regard them as productive of fame and longevity? O Prince, dost thou follow the path of thy predecessors, which promotes happiness and which all applaud? O Bharata, dost thou partake of delicious dishes by thyself? When amongst thy companions, dost thou first present them with succulent food and then partake of it thyself? Know, O Brother, that monarch who is acquainted with the law and also knows how

to administer justice and rules by righteous means, becomes Lord of the earth and enters heaven on his death."

CHAPTER 101

Shri Rama hears the account of his father's death

BHARATA, hearing these words of Rama, replied: "What will the discharge of royal duties avail me, who am destitute of all virtue? O Great One, according to the tradition of our line, the younger brother may not be king while the elder lives, therefore, O Raghava, return with me to the auspicious city of Ayodhya and for the sake of our family, cause thyself to be installed as king. Some may consider the king a man, but I hold him to be a god, since his conduct differs from others, being inspired by duty and divine grace. When I was at the home of my maternal uncle and thou exiled to the forest, King Dasaratha, adored by the good, the performer of spiritual sacrifices, departed to heaven. As soon as thou, with Sita and Lakshmana, hadst left the capital, the king overwhelmed by sorrow and affliction, passed away. O Chief of Men, offer the traditional libations for thy father; Shatrughna and I have already carried out this ritual. O Prince, it is said that the water and rice offered by a beloved son, grants imperishable bliss to one departed. O Raghava, thou wast indeed the beloved of thy royal father; through grief on thy account and the desire to see thee, thy sire, his mind unceasingly fixed on thee, overcome by sorrow, departed to heaven."

CHAPTER 102

They are all afflicted with grief

On hearing the account of his father's death, from his brother, Shri Rama fell unconscious.

Bharata's words proved as dreadful to Shri Rama, as the mace of Indra falling on the danavas in battle. Wringing his hands, Raghava fell to the earth like a tree severed by an axe. The Lord of the World, Shri Rama, fallen on the earth, lay like an elephant which, having borne away the river bank, sinks under the load. His two brothers together with Sita, perceiving him to have fallen in a swoon, sprinkled him with water in order to restore him.

Recovering somewhat, Shri Rama began to lament. The virtuous prince, conscious that his sire had passed away, uttered these pious words to Bharata: "What should I do in Ayodhya now my father has departed to heaven? Who can preserve the capital bereft of this illustrious monarch? What can I, worthless and wretched, do for that magnanimous one, my father, who died through grief at my separation and whose funeral rites I was not able to perform? O Sinless Bharata, thou indeed art blessed, by whom the last rites of thy warrior parent were performed. Now when I return to the capital after completing the term of my exile, none will instruct me in what is good and what is evil. Formerly, in affection, my father being pleased with my good conduct, enlightened me. Who will now utter those words which fell pleasingly on my ears?"

Turning his face towards Sita whose countenance resembled the full moon, Rama thus addressed her: "O Sita, thy father-in-law has left this life, O Lakshmana, thou art fatherless! Bharata has related this bitter news to us. O Lakshmana, bring the pulp of the Ingudi fruit and change this apparel of bark. I desire to offer libations of water to my royal sire. Let Sita precede me and thou follow her; on such occasions, this procedure must be observed."[1] Then Sumantra, the aged

[1] When they descend into the water the order of the procession is that the children go first according to age, then the women, then the men, the youngest first, the eldest last. The order is reversed when they emerge.

retainer of the royal line, wise, intelligent, tender-hearted, self-subdued, and humble, wholly devoted to Rama, comforted the princes and led them to the river Mandakini whose waters were sacred and meritorious.

Deeply afflicted, the illustrious ones approached the pleasant river that passed through blossoming woods, and descending into the pure, swift-flowing and un-muddied stream, they offered the ritual water in the name of their royal father, saying: "O Great King, may this water be thine." Then Shri Rama, filling his palms with water, turning to the south, wept and said: "O Mighty King, may this sacred water offered to-day by me, be thine for ever in the region of thine ancestors."

Thereafter, Raghava with his brothers offered balls of rice in memory of the king on the shores of the river Mandakini. Having made a cake by mixing the juice of berries with the pulp of the Ingudi fruit, Shri Rama spread it on kusha grass and deeply afflicted, weeping, said: "O Mighty King, be pleased to accept and partake of this food, for that which is man's customary food, the gods approve."

Then ascending the hillside, Shri Rama returned by the way he had come. The great Raghava, reaching the door of the thatched hut, took hold of the hands of Lakshmana and Bharata, and wept. The sound of the weeping of the four princes and Sita re-echoed in the mountains like the roaring of a lion, and the army hearing it were greatly perturbed and said among themselves, "Shri Rama and Bharata have met and they are bewailing the death of the king, their sire."

Leaving their camp and turning their faces to where the sound of weeping arose, they went in haste to that spot. Some mounted horses and elephants, some rode in gilded chariots, and others on foot hastened towards that place, for though Shri Rama had but lately left the capital, it appeared to them as if he had been long absent from them. Desirous of seeing Rama, they proceeded to the hermitage of the illustrious prince in various kinds of vehicles and the sound of their advance and the rolling wheels created a noise like thunder. Elephants terrified by the tumult ran with their mates into other woods, perfuming the forest with their ichor. Boars, wolves, buffaloes, snakes, tigers, wild cattle and deer of many kinds were filled

with fear. Ducks, waterfowl, swans, geese, cuckoos and herons fled in every direction. The air was filled with birds, and the earth with men, rendering both beautiful.

At length, the army reached the place where they perceived the illustrious and innocent Rama, the chief of men, seated on the sacrificial seat, and seeing his condition they began to curse Kaikeyi and Manthara and, approaching closer, wept bitterly. Shri Rama, observing them so afflicted, embraced them like a parent. Embracing those who were worthy of his affection, offering salutations to some, he treated those of his age and his relatives with the respect due to each.

The voice of their weeping filled the earth and sky, and reverberated in the caves and in every quarter like the beat of a drum.

CHAPTER 103

Shri Rama greets the queens

SHRI VASISHTHA, preceded by the widowed queens of King Dasaratha, proceeding towards Shri Rama's hermitage, beheld the slow-moving Mandakini and the holy place frequented by Rama. Afflicted with grief, Queen Kaushalya wept and then said to Sumitra and the other Queens: "O see! here is the place where the defenceless Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, deprived by Kaikeyi of their kingdom, come to bathe. O Sumitra, here meseems thy son Lakshmana unwearyingly brings water for my son. Though engaged in this menial service, a kind office performed for an elder brother is an honourable act! Though the carrying of water is a humble occupation, when Shri Ramachandra, persuaded by Bharata, returns to the capital, then thy son, worthy of every comfort, will abandon these laborious duties."

Queen Kaushalya of large eyes, now perceived the funeral cake offered by Shri Rama in memory of his father. She beheld how the sorrow-stricken Rama had laid the flour ball on the ground in his great sire's remembrance, and she then addressed

the widows of the departed king, saying : " See how this has been offered by Raghava in memory of the great king of the House of Ikshwaku. I do not consider this flour ball mixed with the juice of the Ingudi fruit to be worthy of the Mahatma Dasaratha, who was equal to a god ! How should the sovereign of the earth enclosed between the four seas, find this cake of Ingudi pulp acceptable ? Nothing is more painful to me than this, that the illustrious Rama should offer this paltry flour ball to his deceased father ! Why does my heart not break into a thousand fragments, seeing this poor offering ? It is a common saying among men that the food eaten by a man is the food of his god and his ancestors."

The consorts of the king consoled the chief queen and proceeding onwards, reached the hermitage where they beheld Shri Rama seated like a god descended from heaven. Seeing Shri Rama withdrawn from every pleasure, they were deeply distressed and wept bitterly.

Shri Rama, the Devotee of Truth, rose up and touched the feet of his mothers, and the large-eyed queens with their tender hands took the dust from his feet. Shri Lakshmana, distressed to see their grief, offered salutations to them with deep affection and they, wiping the dust from the feet of Shri Rama, manifested the same love to Prince Lakshmana, since he, too, was the son of King Dasaratha. Sita also, full of grief, her eyes suffused with tears, stood before the queens touching their feet.

Kaushalya, embracing Shri Sita who was emaciated through the privations of her exile, addressed her as a mother her daughter and said: "Alas ! Alas ! the daughter of King Videha, the daughter-in-law of King Dasaratha, and the consort of Shri Ramachandra, has undergone great privations in the forest. O Janaki, I burn with the fire of grief when I behold thy countenance scorched by the sun like the faded crimson water lilies, or gold defiled with dust, or the moon obscured by clouds. I am being consumed by the pain arising from this, like a piece of wood[1] slowly consumed by fire."

While Queen Kaushalya was thus lamenting, Shri Ramachandra approached the Holy Vasishtha and touched his lotus

[1] Videha is the name given to the two pieces of wood from which a fire is kindled. There is, therefore, a play on the name of Sita, here.

feet. Having touched the feet of the great ascetic, who was as resplendent as fire, like Indra offering salutations to the feet of Brihaspati, Shri Rama sat down near him.

Then the pious Bharata accompanied by his counsellors, the chief people of the city, and his generals, approached Shri Rama and occupied a lower seat.

The heroic Bharata, with joined palms, seated by his elder brother who was attired in ascetic's garb, appeared like Prajapati seated before Brahma ! At that moment, the principal citizens present were filled with curiosity to know what Shri Bharata would say to Raghava. The ever-truthful and valiant Rama, seated with Bharata and Lakshmana, together resembled three ritual fires in the place of sacrifice.

CHAPTER 104

He requests Prince Bharata to ascend the throne

SHRI RAMA, together with Lakshmana, addressed Shri Bharata, saying : " O Bharata, say why thou art come hither to the forest in ascetic's garb, clothed in bark and deerskin ? For what purpose, O Prince, hast thou, abandoning thy throne, come to the forest, attired in the skin of the antelope ? "

Thus questioned, Shri Bharata controlling his grief, answered : " O Noble Sire, my father, the king, by my mother acting in an improper manner, has died of grief through separation from his son. O Mighty Prince, my mother has done an exceedingly evil deed and forfeited her fair name. Widowed and overwhelmed with affliction, she will fall into hell. Though the son of Kaikeyi, yet am I thy servant. Be gracious to me and allow thyself to be installed to-day and ascend the throne like Indra. The elders of the people and my widowed mother have come hither to entreat thee. Be pleased to grant our request, O Lord.

" O Thou who payest due deference to all men, being the eldest son of the king, shouldst by right occupy the throne.

Accept the burden of kingship and gratify the desire of thy friends. The earth, obtaining thee as her Lord, will rest satisfied as the winter night in the presence of the moon. Not only am I thy brother, but thy devoted follower and servant. I and my ministers salute thee and beg of thee to look with favour on our request.

" O Chief of Men, let not these counsellors and those who have traditionally held office, plead in vain."

Having spoken, Prince Bharata, his eyes suffused with tears, placed his head at the feet of Shri Rama. Shri Rama lifting him up embraced Prince Bharata who was sighing like one distraught, and said: " O Bharata, why should a virtuous and enlightened prince such as thou, act so that his elder brother commit sin? O Hero, I see no fault in thee, but it behoves thee not to speak ill of thy mother. O Sinless One, the father or the spiritual preceptor can order his disciple, his servant or his wife as he will. Therefore, it must be known to thee, that a wise son or devotee should ever manifest obedience. I am, therefore, submissive to my sire.

" O Lovely One, we are subject to the king and it is one if he send us to the forest, to the abode of ascetics, or retain us in his proximity. O Chief of the Virtuous, a mother should be revered even as the father. O Bharata, by the command of my pious mother and father, I was sent to the forest, how should I dare to disobey them?

" Do thou, O Prince, return to the capital and acclaimed by the people, ascend the throne, while I reside in the forest as an ascetic. Remember, thus did the king resolve in the presence of his people and now he has departed. The sovereign is the instructor of his people and of thee also, and it was meet he should do as he has done. O Bharata, do thou enjoy the kingdom given thee by my father.

" O Beautiful One, I shall remain in the Dandaka forest for fourteen years and enjoy what my father has conferred on me. The illustrious monarch, my sire, honoured by the whole world, has commanded me to come to the forest and to obey him is my happiness.

" Meseems the sovereignty of the whole world is vain if it be mine in defiance of my father's command."

CHAPTER 105

Prince Bharata appeals to Shri Rama to return and rule the kingdom

THE princes surrounded by relatives and friends passed the night sorrowing. The day having dawned, the brothers observed the fire sacrifice and performed the repetition of silent prayer on the banks of the river Mandakini, then entering the hermitage of Rama, they sat in profound silence, no one uttering a word, a great peace prevailing over all.

At length, Shri Bharata, in the midst of his friends, broke the silence and thus addressed Shri Rama: "O My Brother, our illustrious sovereign conferred the kingdom on me to satisfy my mother and fulfil the obligation of his former boons and my mother having given this kingdom to me, I now offer it to thee, enjoy it without hindrance. When the dam bursts in the rainy season, none can stem the tide, similarly none but thee can protect this vast dominion. O King, as an ass cannot equal the pace of a horse, nor an ordinary bird's flight that of an eagle, so am I unable to rule the kingdom without thee.

"O Rama, happy is the sovereign on whom others depend, but wretched is the one who depends on others. A tree planted and watered, though it grow and spread forth great branches that no dwarf can scale, and be covered with blossom, if it bear no fruit, the one who planted it suffers obloquy. O Mighty Hero, let this metaphor be understood by thee, that thou, being the Lord of all, mayst guide thy servants. O Lord, let us behold thee, the destroyer of thy foes, seated on the royal throne, shining resplendent like the sun. May these mighty tuskers follow thy chariot and all the queens dwelling in the palace rejoice."

The people hearing Shri Bharata's words applauded them saying, "Well said!" "Well said!"

Then the compassionate Rama perceiving Bharata afflicted and lamenting, consoled him saying: "O Bharata, man is not free, time[1] drags him hither and thither. All objects perish, all individualised souls must depart when their merit is exhausted;

[1] Time is the form of destiny.

sons, friends, wives, all who live must die one day. Hoarding and spending, prosperity and destitution, meeting and parting, life and death are all akin. When the ripe fruit falls, we are not surprised, thus a man being born should not fear when death claims him.

"As a building supported by stout pillars on becoming old, falls into ruins, so man subject to age, must one day meet with dissolution. O Bharata, the night once past, does not come again; so the waters of the Yamuna, flowing to the sea, do not return. See! the days and nights are passing away, decreasing the period of our life's span, as the rays of the sun in summer suck up the earth's moisture. O Prince, grieve for thyself therefore, there is nought else worthy of grief! Age withers all whether movable or immovable. Death is ever at our side, nor does it leave us when we travel to a distant place, and it is still present at our returning!

" What shall a man do when his skin is wrinkled and grey hair covers his head and he is stricken in years? Man rejoices when the sun rises and sets, heedless of the waning of his powers. He welcomes the approach of each season, such as the arrival of spring, yet the succession of the seasons devours man's days! As pieces of driftwood, floating on the sea, come together for a space, so wives, sons, relatives, wealth and property remain with us a while, but in the course of time, leave us.

" One, sitting by the wayside, cries to a group of travellers passing by, ' Let me also go with you! ' why then should man grieve to tread the road, which has been trodden by his predecessors? The life of man, like a river flowing, does not return, thus our days diminish and we should perform those righteous acts that bring us to the knowledge of Reality.

" Practising virtue, man should enjoy worldly pleasures; our father, the illustrious Dasaratha, having performed benevolent deeds and given fitting charitable gifts, has departed, clothed in virtue. Having cherished his servants and nourished his people, having levied those taxes alone warranted by moral duty, having set up water tanks and created reservoirs and performed many sacrificial acts, he has passed away. Leaving the world after enjoying a variety of pleasures and offering countless sacrifices, the king, at a great age, has gone to heaven.

"O Brother, it is not meet to grieve for the king, who, full of years, having enjoyed the pleasures of the world, respected by the good, has given up his life. Having abandoned his worn-out frame, he has obtained the form of a celestial being.

"A wise, learned and enlightened man like thee, should not grieve for such a sire. Exercising patience, thou shouldst cease to lament and giving up sorrow return to the capital. O Chief among the Eloquent, thy father has commanded thee to dwell in Ayodhya. I too will perform the behests of him who ever practised righteousness!

"I cannot disregard the commands of my illustrious father, he is worthy to be obeyed by thee and me, being our parent and our ruler. O Son of Raghu, I shall, therefore, obey his will and dwell in the forest. O Chief of Men, those who desire felicity in a future state, and who are virtuous and benevolent should obey their elders. O Great One, bear in mind the behests of our father, a lover of truth, and return to the capital to rule over the kingdom!"

The magnanimous Rama, having uttered these sage words relative to the need for obedience to his father, became silent.

CHAPTER 106

In spite of the entreaties exhorting him to return, Shri Rama remains steadfast in his vow

RAMA, the lover of his people, having spoken, ceased; then the pious Bharata answered Rama, putting forth persuasive arguments of righteous purport, saying: "O Lord, who is there in this world like thee? Adversity does not move thee, nor does any agreeable thing touch thee. All look on thee as their superior, yet thou seekest counsel of thine elders!

"The man to whom the living and dead are one and who is indifferent as to what he possesses or loses, for what reason should he grieve? O Lord, those who like thee, know, as thou dost, what is the nature of the soul and its essence, are not moved in the hour of distress!

" O Prince of Raghu, like the gods, thou art magnanimous, thou art ever forbearing and faithful to thy vows. Thou art wise, thou knowest and seest all! Thou art aware of the motives of men's actions and the cause of their abandoning them, therefore, that distress which is insupportable to others, does not, in any wise, disturb thee."

Having spoken thus, Bharata continued: " O Rama, be gracious to me, though during my absence in a strange land, my mother committed those sins which cause my affliction. I am bound by the ties of duty, else would I have slain my wicked mother. What is evil and what is good is known to me, descended as I am from the righteous King Dasaratha, therefore I am unable to act contrary to virtue. I cannot speak evil in the assembly of my pious and aged father, who has passed away, and where is a man to be found so wholly acquainted with the law of righteousness as was the king, yet what person familiar with the moral law, would commit so great a wrong prompted by the desire to please a woman? There is an ancient saying that, at the approach of death, man loses the power of judgment! The king has verily justified this adage to the whole world! Through fear of Queen Kaikeyi's wrath or her threat of self-imposed destruction, or through mental agitation, the king may have acted thus without consulting his subjects, but thou art not bound by such a deed. He who imputes the transgressions of his father to righteous motives is not considered a good son; as heir to the king, reveal not the errors of thy sire, but conceal this unjust deed from the world.

" O Hero, it is thy duty to save my mother Kaikeyi, my father, my relatives and myself from the consequcnces of this action condemned by all. O Brother, remember thy duty as a warrior and reflect on the outcome of thy sojourn in the forest as an ascetic, but do thou also consider the good of thy people. It becomes thee not to undertake this course of action. The first duty of a warrior is to be installed so that he may be able to protect his people. Say, why should a man giving up that which is an established duty, embrace that which is wretched, cheerless, visionary and undefined? If, O Blessed One, thou desirest to undertake this mortification, why dost thou not seek it through the arduous labour of ruling the four castes? It is said that

the duty of the householder is the highest dharma, then, why dost thou abandon it?

"O Lord, hear me; I am but thy child in respect of learning, age and state, how should I be able to govern the kingdom? I, a child, void of understanding and virtue and in rank also thine inferior; how should I be able to live without thee much less rule in thy stead? Therefore, O Raghava, O Thou Virtuous One, do thou, with thy relatives govern the kingdom without opposition and acquire merit! The great sage, the Holy Vasishtha, is here present with the ministers and priests, permit thyself to be crowned and return with us to Ayodhya!

"As Indra, having conquered his foes, entered heaven attended by the Maruts, do thou enter Ayodhya, thereby discharging thy duties to the gods, the sages, and thine ancestors, gratifying the ambitions of thy friends! Regard me as thy servant and command me! O Noble One, let thy friends to-day rejoice at thine enthronement and let the evil doers flee to the uttermost ends of the earth! O Chief of Men, wash away the taint of my mother's guilt and deliver our great parent from this heinous sin. With my head bent in submission, I entreat thee; as Shri Vishnu shows his compassion to all beings, do thou show mercy to us. Shouldst thou however reject my prayer and go hence to some other forest, then will I follow thee there!"

Shri Rama, thus entreated by Shri Bharata, who had placed his head at the feet of his brother in humility, still remained steadfast in his vow and did not waver or consent to return to Ayodhya. Beholding the constancy of Shri Rama, all present rejoiced to see him so faithful to his vow, yet bewailed his determination not to return to the capital.

The merchants, the learned brahmins and the priests filled with wonder, and the weeping matrons, praised Bharata and unitedly entreated Rama to return.

CHAPTER 107

He instructs Prince Bharata to return and be installed

SHRI RAMA, worshipped by Bharata, who sought to petition him further, replied to his younger brother in the presence of the other warriors, saying: " O Bharata, Son of Queen Kaikeyi, and the mighty Dasaratha, what thou hast said is meet and right. In ancient times when King Dasaratha, our sire, sought thy mother, Princess Kaikeyi, in marriage, he promised her father that he would be succeeded by a son of hers. Furthermore, in the war between the gods and asuras, our sovereign made the promise of two boons to thy mother in return for her great services, in consequence of which thy illustrious and charming mother asked two favours of the king, holding him to his word.

" O Lion among Men! By one boon was my exile secured and by the other the kingdom was obtained for thee. O Chief of men, as a result of the boon granted by my father, I have consented to live in the forest for fourteen years.

" Determined to prove the truth of my father's word, I have entered the forest with Sita and Lakshmana, regardless of heat and cold. O Great Ruler, it becomes thee also to prove thy father to be a votary of truth and allow thyself to be speedily installed. O Bharata, honour this debt, thou owest it to the king, and thus protect his fair name. By occupying the throne, shalt thou succeed in pleasing me and rejoicing thy mother, Queen Kaikeyi.

" O Friend, I have heard that formerly a great monarch named Gaya, when offering a sacrifice at Gaya, to the spirit of his ancestors, said: 'A son is called " Puttra " because he saves his father from hell and protects the spirits of his ancestors by enjoined acts of benevolence.'

" To have many learned and virtuous sons is greatly to be desired, for some of them may offer a sacrifice at Gaya and thus deliver the spirits of their ancestors.

" O Son of Raghu, all the royal sages have approved this tenet, thou shouldst also, therefore, accept it. O Bharata, do thou

return to Ayodhya with Shatrughna and thy people and promote the happiness of thy subjects there.

"O King, I shall speedily retire to the Dandaka forest with Sita and Lakshmana. O Bharata, be thou king of men and I will be sovereign over the wild beasts. Do thou return joyfully to the capital and I will cheerfully proceed to the forest.

"May the royal canopy protect thee from the sun's heat, I shall seek shelter from its rays in the dense shadows of the trees. O Bharata, Shatrughna of limitless understanding shall attend thee, and I shall be attended by the illustrious Prince Lakshmana. O Brother, do not be a prey to grief any longer, thus shall we, the four sons of the great King Dasaratha, establish his fame in the realm of truth."

CHAPTER 108

A brahmin utters words contrary to dharma

As Shri Rama thus instructed Bharata, a brahmin named Javali uttered these words contrary to dharma: "Well-spoken, O Raghava, but it is not for thee to think as common men, for thou art a man of understanding and also a philosopher. Consider well, O Prince, a man has neither a real friend nor an enemy, he enters the world alone and leaves it alone also. He who thinks 'This is my father' or 'This is my mother' and becomes attached to this relationship is without sense. From the standpoint of right reasoning, none belongs to any. As a man travelling from his own village to another, remains for the night somewhere on the way and leaves at dawn, so father, mother, wealth and family remain with a man for a brief space and the wise do not become attached to them.

"O Chief of Men, thou dost not, being youthful, merit the path of suffering set with thorns; it ill becomes thee to abandon thy father's kingdom. Return to Ayodhya and rule over that prosperous land. The goddess protecting Ayodhya, devoted to thee, awaits thy return. O Prince, enjoy those chosen

pleasures which befit a king and divert thyself in the capital as Indra in Amaravati. Dasaratha is nought to thee nor thou to him, the king is one person and thou another, therefore, follow the advice I give thee.

"The father's seed is but the remote cause of man's birth, since if it does not enter the mother's womb, it cannot fructify; the true source of conception is the womb of the mother. The king has departed to the place destined for all mortals. Why dost thou claim this false relationship and distress thyself in vain, O Rama? I grieve for those who, abandoning the pleasures of the world, seek to acquire merit for felicity hereafter and sink to an untimely death, I do not grieve for others. Men waste food and other precious things by offering them up yearly, as sacrifices in honour of their departed ancestors. O Rama, has a dead man ever partaken of food? If food that is eaten by one, nourishes another, then those who journey need never carry provision on the way. Relatives might feed a brahmin, in his name, at home!

"O Ramachandra, these scriptural injunctions were laid down by learned men, skilled in inducing others to give, and finding other means of obtaining wealth, thus subjugating the simple-minded. Their doctrine is 'Sacrifice, give in charity, consecrate yourselves, undergo austerities and become ascetics'. O Rama, be wise, there exists no world but this, that is certain! Enjoy that which is present and cast behind thee that which is unpleasant! Adopting the principle acceptable to all, do thou receive the kingdom offered thee by Bharata."

CHAPTER 109

Shri Rama replies in words based on the Vedas

SHRI RAMA, patiently giving ear to the utterance of Javali, replied with a due sense of judgment and in words based on his belief that those duties enjoined in the Vedas, should be fulfilled. "O Muni, that which thou hast spoken with the desire to

please me, is not authorized, nor are thy admonitions just, since even the most cursory analysis proves them to be false. O Sage, in the assembly of the good, men who are not self-subdued and who are wanting in integrity and those who act contrary to what is ordered by the scriptures, are not honoured. It is his conduct that renders man virtuous, a coward or a hero and transmutes impurity to purity. Should I embrace error and abandon the authority of my elders, relinquishing rectitude and honour, as also moral conduct and the Vedic ordinance, then I, conforming to thy beliefs and sacrificing prudence, would forfeit the respect of wise and virtuous men.

" Following thy counsel, were I to cease to pursue the way of truth and tread the lower path, by what means should I attain heaven ? Were I to depart from the moral code, then every man might act according to his inclination, since the subject mirrors the king, in action.

"Above all, a sovereign should manifest probity, benevolence, his chief duty being to uphold truth ; truth is verily the kingdom, by truth is the world supported.

" The gods and sages esteem truth as the highest principle. He who utters truth attains the supreme state. Men fear a liar as they do a venomous serpent, truth is the root of all felicity and the support not only of this world, but the best means of attaining heaven !

" Whatever is offered in sacrifice, whatever austerity is undertaken has its foundation in truth, so the Vedas declare, hence truth is the most sacred of all things.

" One maintains a family, another governs the whole world, another falls into hell, another attains heaven in accordance with the fruit of his actions ! Acquainted with the law of Karma founded on truth, ought I not to prove my sire a devotee of that truth ? Why should not I, who have pledged my word, follow that which I have accepted as truth ? Honouring my father's vow, I shall never abandon the way of truth either for the sake of governing a kingdom or through being misled by others or through ignorance or anger. Hast thou not heard that neither the Gods nor the ancestors receive the offerings of one who is irresolute, infirm of purpose and false to his word ?

" I hold truth as the supreme virtue of mankind. I desire

to reverence that truth upheld by men of old. Should I follow the duty of a warrior, I should be unjust. To do that which is false is worthy only of mean, covetous and depraved souls. Should I pursue that crooked path, indicated by thee, then I should perpetrate falsehood, through the mind, the body and the soul. Those who uphold truth acquire land, renown, fame, and heaven also; therefore, let all men utter truth and act according to truth!

"That which thou, after much deliberation, believest to be true, and recommendest to me is wholly improper. O how can I disregard the command of my sire, that I should reside in the forest? When I pledged my word in the presence of my father, to enter the forest, Queen Kaikeyi was rendered glad at heart, how should I now give her cause for distress?

"Giving up falsehood and deceit, differentiating between what should and should not be done, subduing the senses, possessed of full faith in the Vedic injunctions, I shall devote myself to the fulfilment of my father's will!

"By sacrifice, one acquires the state of Indra and enters heaven. The sages by virtue of sacrifice have gone thither."

The illustrious and glorious Ramachandra, highly displeased by the materialistic arguments of Javali spoke thus in terms of refutation and reproof: "O Javali, by speaking the truth, by pursuing the duties of their caste and station, by manifesting their valour in time of need, by gentle speech, by service of their spiritual preceptor, the gods and unexpected guests, men attain heaven! Therefore, those brahmins instructed in truth, pursue virtue with a single mind in accordance with their caste and station and eagerly await their entrance to Brahmaloka.[1] O Javali, I perceive with regret the action of my illustrious parent in permitting one of atheistic ideas, who has fallen from the path of rectitude enjoined in the Vedas, to remain in his court. Those who preach the heretical doctrine of the Charvaka school, are not only infidels, but have deviated from the path of truth. It is the duty of a monarch to deal with such persons as with felons, nor should men of understanding and learning stand in the presence of such atheists.

"O Javali, those versed in wisdom, who preceded thee,

[1] Brahmaloka—the abode of Shri Brahma, the Creator.

performed many holy acts by virtue of which they acquired eminence here and in the spiritual realm. Those sages have ever practised harmlessness, truth, asceticism, charity, benevolence and sacrifice.

" O Javali, those who fulfil their spiritual duty, who are the foremost in deeds of charity, and who harm none, who frequent the assemblies of the good and are revered by all men, they are without sin, their name shall live for ever as that of our illustrious Guru, Shri Vasishtha."

Rama, having uttered these harsh words to Javali, he, with humility addressed Rama saying : " O Rama, I am no atheist ; on this occasion, I assumed this atheistical disguise in order to turn thee from thy purpose and persuade thee to return to the capital ! "

CHAPTER 110

Vasishtha proclaiming the tradition of the dynasty, calls upon Rama to return

PERCEIVING Rama still to be indignant at the speech of Javali, the holy Vasishtha said :—

" O Rama, the Sage Javali is a believer in the transmigration of the soul ; he has thus spoken through his desire to persuade thee to return to the capital. O Sovereign of Men, hear from me concerning the creation of the world.

" In the beginning, all was water, and from that element the earth was formed and after this, Brahma and other gods came into existence. The eternal, imperishable Brahma was begotten of akasha (ether) and from him came forth Marichi, and from him Kashyapa was produced. From Kashyapa was born Vivaswat, and the son of Vivaswat was Manu himself, who was the first among the Prajapatis. Ikshwaku was the son of Manu and to him the whole world was given by Manu, and Ikshwaku became the first King of Ayodhya. The son of

Ikshwaku was named Kukshi and his son was Vikukshi, whose son was the resplendent and illustrious King Vana and the great warrior Anavanya was his son. During the reign of the virtuous King Anavanya there was neither famine nor scarcity of rain nor any thief. The son of Anavanya was Prithu and his son was Trishanku. So great was Trishanku's observance of truth that he attained heaven in his embodied state. His son was the mighty Dhundhumara. The son of Dhundhumara was Yuvanashwa and his son was Mandhata. The illustrious Susandhi was the son of Mandhata and Dhruvasandhi and Prasenagita were the offspring of Susandhi. The renowned Bharata was the son of Dhruvasandhi and from Bharata sprang Ajita, against whom the great kings, Himaya, Talagangha and Shashavindu declared war. Ajita laid siege to them by building fortifications, but found their defeat beset with difficulties.

" Resigning his throne, he retired to the delightful Himalayas to devote himself to spiritual practices. It is said that one of his two queens was pregnant and the other gave her poison to destroy the foetus. The Queen Kalindi approached the Sage Chyavana, the son of Bhrigu, who resided in the Himalayas at that time, and paid him respectful homage. He, gratified, knowing her to be desirous of a son, said: ' O Goddess, thou shalt bring forth a son who will be renowned, virtuous, magnanimous, of excellent conduct, a promoter of his race and a subduer of his foes.'

" The Queen hearing this, saluted the rishi with reverence; she then returned home and brought forth a son, whose eyes resembled the lotus and who resembled Brahma in splendour. Being born with the poison that her fellow-consort had administered to her, Kalindi's son was named Sagara.

" Consecrated at a fitting season, King Sagara drained the ocean. His son was called Asamanjas, he oppressed the people and the king ordered him to be banished on account of his evil ways. The son of Asamanjas was Anshuman and his son was Dilipa. The son of Dilipa was Bhagiratha. The son of Bhagiratha was Kakustha whose son was Raghu from whom the royal line has since been named. The sons of Shri Raghu were known by the names of Pravriddha, Purushadaka, Kalmashapada and Soudasa. The son of Kalmashapada was Shankhana

who rising to great power, by a curse, was destroyed wth his whole army. The mighty hero Sudarshana was the son of Shankhana and his son was Agnivarna and Agnivarna's son was Shighraga. His son was named Meru, and Meru's son was Prashusvara, and his son was the great Sage Ambarisha. The son of Ambarisha was the truthful Prince Nahusha, whose son was the virtuous Nabhaga. Nabhaga had two sons, Aja and Suvrata, and the son of Aja was the illustrious sovereign Dasaratha. Thou art the son of the great monarch Dasaratha renowned all through the world, who reigned over earth and heaven.

" In the dynasty of Ikshwaku, the eldest son succeeds to the throne ; while the eldest son lives, none else can become king. It is not meet for thee to violate this sacred tradition of the House of Raghu. O Great One, reign over this earth filled with treasures and those extensive dominions subject to thee, as did thy sire ! "

CHAPTER III

Prince Bharata still entreats Shri Rama who is resolved to follow his father's command

HAVING spoken thus, Shri Vasishtha continued, uttering words of wisdom. " O Rama, when a man is born, he must regard as his teachers, his father, his mother and his spiritual preceptor.

" O Chief of Men, the parents bestow on man the physical frame, but the spiritual preceptor confers wisdom on him, and hence he is called Guru.

" I am the preceptor of thy father and of thee, mark my counsel and do not over-ride the way of the good. O My Son, here are thy relatives, the learned brahmins and the people of the capital, as also the warriors and merchants. Fulfil thy duty to them and do not exceed the limits of moral obligation.

" Here is thy pious and aged mother, whom thou shouldst not disobey. That man is called virtuous who renders obedience to his mother.

" O Prince, thou shalt not have swerved from the path of righteous action by acceding to Bharata's request that thou shouldst occupy the throne."

Thus, having addressed Rama with mildness, the holy Guru Vasishtha resumed his seat.

The mighty Rama then made answer, saying: " The good that parents do to their son cannot easily be recompensed. In childhood, they present him with beautiful attire and delectable dishes, they put him to rest and tenderly rub his body with oil of sesamum seed and manifest affection in gentle counsels; further they strive single-mindedly for his ultimate good.

" The commands of my sire, the author of my being, shall not be set aside."

The magnanimous Bharata hearing these words of Ramachandra, suffered great distress, and spoke to Sumantra, saying: " O Charioteer, prepare a seat of kusha grass on this trestle seat, I will place myself before Shri Rama till he be pleased to grant my request. Like a brahmin, who is destitute, I will lie at the door of this hut, fasting and covering my face, till Shri Rama consents to return to the capital."

Sumantra looking towards Shri Rama, spread the kusha grass, and Prince Bharata, full of grief, seated himself there, before his brother.

Perceiving this, Shri Rama, chief of the royal sages, said to him: " O Beloved Bharata, what wrong have I done that thou shouldst sit thus before me? A brahmin may adopt this measure towards his aggressor, but it is not meet that a crowned head should do so. O Lion among Men, rise, abandon this cruel vow and return speedily to the capital."

Bharata, afflicted, yet resolute, remaining firm, said to the people of the capital and of the country who surrounded him: " Why do you not also make entreaty to Shri Rama? "

Then they answered saying: " We are unable to press Kakustha[1] further, since he is resolved to follow his father's command."

Rama hearing their words said to Bharata: " O Prince, consider the words of thy companions versed in righteousness

[1] Kakustha—a name of Rama, as descendant of King Ikshwaku.

and weigh the matter carefully. Having reflected on their words with attention, arise, O Raghava, and undergo that which shall purify thee for having enacted that which does not become a warrior. Do thou drink water and touch me also."

Bharata rising, said: "Hear, O Brahmins, Countrymen and Warriors! I do not desire the kingdom of my father, I did not urge my mother to demand it. I knew naught of the exile of Shri Rama. If it be required that someone shall dwell in the forest in obedience to my father's command, then will I reside there for fourteen years in his stead."

Shri Rama, astonished at his brother's resolution, addressed the people present, saying: "Friends, whatever was bought, pledged or sold by the king in his lifetime, can by no means be cancelled by me or Bharata. Neither can I accept contumely and permit Bharata to go as my representative to the forest. What Kaikeyi demanded was rightfully granted by the king.

"I know Bharata to be disinterested and a true disciple of his Guru, and that excellent one is a lover of truth. I herewith declare that on my return from the forest, I shall accept the kingdom and with my virtuous brother govern the country with honour.

"O Bharata, I have discharged the boon granted to Kaikeyi by the king and vindicated his honour. Do thou liberate the king from the charge of falsehood and redeem the second boon."

CHAPTER 112

Following the advice of the celestial sages, Prince Bharata is reconciled to becoming Shri Rama's deputy

The great sages who were present at the meeting of the two illustrious brothers, were astonished. The royal sages, those perfect ones also celestial beings, who were invisible, praised the two princes and said: "Blessed is the king, whose sons are highly virtuous and veracious, we are immeasurably gratified to hear their converse."

Desirous that the life and reign of Ravana should end soon, certain sages approached Bharata and unitedly addressed him, saying: " O Bharata, O Highly Resolute Prince, O Pious and Renowned One, recollect that thou art born in a royal line, let not the word of Rama be disregarded by thee, if thou art wishful to bring felicity to the spirit of thy parent. It is our desire that thy father who has entered heaven may be absolved from every debt, having discharged his obligations to Queen Kaikeyi."

Having spoken thus, these celestial sages returned to their abode.

Rama, gratified by their words, said: " By you, have I been assisted in upholding virtue."

Prince Bharata with trembling accents again entreated Rama, saying: " O Rama, he who is skilled in righteous governance and who is the eldest, ascends the throne. Do thou, observing the tradition, fulfil the desire of thy mother Kaushalya. I alone have neither the courage to administer so vast a dominion, nor should I be able to satisfy the people of the capital and kingdom.

" Our relatives, friends, and warriors await thy conversion to sovereignty as the husbandman eagerly anticipates the rain clouds. Therefore, O Wise One, accept the crown for thou alone art able to establish this kingdom."

Having spoken thus, Bharata fell at the feet of his brother and fervently entreated him, crying: " O Rama, O Rama."

Shri Rama, raising up the young prince who, eloquent and lotus-eyed, resembled a wild swan embraced him, and said: " That genuine humility which thou hast demonstrated will furnish thee with sufficient courage to govern the kingdom. Do thou consult thy ministers, counsellors and friends in the great work of thy rule. The moon may cease from shining, and the Himalaya abandon the snows, Mount Meru its splendour or the ocean exceed its boundary, but I shall not relinquish the vow made in the presence of my sire. O Beloved One, it is not for thee to determine whether that which was brought about by thy mother was done through love of thee, or through ambition to see thee made king, it is for thee to treat her as thy parent."

Then Prince Bharata answered Rama who resembled the sun

in glory and the new moon in splendour, saying: "O Noble One, place thy feet in these sandals adorned with gold, since soon they will furnish our only means of support and protection."

The illustrious Rama having put on the sandals, took them off and returned them to Bharata. He, bowing reverently to the sandals addressed Rama thus: "From to-day I shall for fourteen years, assuming matted locks and a robe of bark, live on fruits and roots, awaiting thy return. Offering up the management of the kingdom to these sandals for fourteen years, if I do not see thee returning on the final day of that period, I will enter the fire and be consumed!"

Shri Rama embracing Bharata with great reverence answered "Be it so." Then he spoke further saying: "Cherish thy mother Kaikeyi, and be not angry with her. In my name and in the name of Shri Sita, I adjure thee to reverence and protect Queen Kaikeyi!" His eyes suffused with tears, Shri Rama then bade farewell to Shri Bharata and Shatrughna.

Bharata offering due reverence to the ornate and glittering sandals, circumambulated Shri Rama and placed them on the head of the mighty elephant belonging to King Dasaratha. Then Shri Rama, immoveable like the Himalayas, in the practice of virtue and the promoter of the honour of the House of Raghu, made obeisance to his holy Guru, the ministers, citizens and his brothers, and dismissed them.

His mothers, overcome with grief, were unable to utter a single word. To them also Shri Rama offered reverent salutations and sorrowfully entered his own dwelling.

CHAPTER 113

Prince Bharata commences the return journey

THEN Shri Bharata, fully reconciled, taking the sandals from the head of the elephant, placed them on his own and ascended the chariot with Shatrughna, Shri Vasishtha, Vamadeva and Javali of firm vows, with all the sagacious counsellors preceding

him. Circulating the Mount Chittrakuta, they proceeded towards the east, by the river Mandakini, where they beheld countless veins of metal.

Shri Bharata with his army, went forward and at a short distance from Chittrakuta, perceived the hermitage in which the holy Bharadwaja and other sages dwelt. Approaching the hermitage of the Sage Bharadwaja, Shri Bharata having dismounted from his chariot, offered salutations to him. Bharadwaja, full of joy, said to Bharata: " O Friend, hast thou beheld Shri Rama? Is thy purpose accomplished?"

Shri Bharata, ever devoted to his brother, answered the sage, saying: " O Lord, I and the holy Guru Vasishtha besought Rama to return, but he cheerfully replied: ' My father's decree that I should reside in the forest for fourteen years, shall be faithfully observed by me '."

Then the learned and eloquent Shri Vasishtha, skilled in wisdom, addressed Shri Rama in this wise: " O Wise One, be pleased to bestow thy sandals, adorned with gems, on thy deputy. Do thou bear the good of the capital in thy heart.

Shri Rama, in obedience to his holy Guru, turning towards the east, put on the sandals and thereafter delivered them to me.

" Now, frustrated in my design to bring back Shri Rama, I am returning to Ayodhya with these sandals."

The Maharishi Bharadwaja, then uttered these auspicious words: " O Prince, versed in the knowledge of virtue, thine excellence is as little a source of wonder, as water ever flowing towards a hollow. King Dasaratha, possessed of a righteous and duty-loving son, such as thou art, has surely found immortality."

Shri Bharata, touching the feet of the holy rishi, in great reverence, with joined palms, circumambulated him and then, with his counsellors, proceeded to Ayodhya.

The army following Prince Bharata, some riding elephants, some horses, and some in bullock carts, crossed the Yamuna with its singing waves and came to the sacred waters of the Ganges.

Having crossed the holy river Gunga, with his companions, Shri Bharata entered the town of Shringavera and from there

passed on to Ayodhya. Beholding Ayodhya, a stricken city, deserted by his father, King Dasaratha and his brother Shri Ramachandra, Prince Bharata, deeply distressed, said to his charioteer: "Behold the ruined capital bereft of its former glory, unadorned and lacking all signs of festivity! How silent, how wretched is this city, formerly so full of life."

CHAPTER 114

He finds Ayodhya desolate

THE prince, in his chariot, which gave forth a thunderous sound as it rolled onward, entered Ayodhya. There he beheld the city where cats and owls ranged, and where the doors of the dwellings were closed, darkness and gloom reigning over all. The city resembling the planet Rohini,[1] that has lost its splendour on the moon's eclipse, or a mountain stream, whose waters have dried up in the sun's heat, deserted by the waterfowl, the fishes all having perished.

Sad and wretched, on account of its separation from Rama, Ayodhya resembled the sacrificial flame, which when the oblation is poured into it, shines like a golden cone and then sinks into smoking ash, or like a mighty army divested of its weapons in battle, its horses, elephants, chariots and standards scattered abroad and its heroic warriors slain. That city which looked, as it were, like the waves of the sea whipped into foam by the storm, rolling and breaking and then sinking into silence with the dying out of the wind, or like the sacrificial pavilion deserted by the priests who go forth in search of alms after the sacrifice; or like kine bereft of the bull, who have ceased to graze in the pasture and stand in the enclosure dispirited; or like a necklace stripped of its precious gems; or like a meteor, its virtue exhausted, fallen to earth, deprived of its splendour; or like a flowering branch, loaded with blossom in the Spring, visited

[1] Robini—The constellation of five stars (Taurus) containing Aldebaran, which star is probably meant here. Called the "Red One" and said to be the favourite consort of the moon.

by a swarm of bees, that is suddenly consumed by a forest fire.

The streets were deserted and the fairs and markets closed, and no merchandise was offered for sale. Dark and fearful, Ayodhya resembled the moon and stars obscured by heavy clouds in the rainy season, or a deserted tavern, its revellers departed, the liquor expended and naught but fragments of broken glass and pots in wild disorder scattered here and there. Ayodhya appeared like a tank sunk into the earth, the water being spent, the foundations having collapsed, the jars and earthen vessels lying scattered amidst the thirsty, standing there in despair ; or it resembled the string of a great hero's bow that has been severed by the arrow of his adversary and is lying on the earth ; or an aged and ill-nourished mule, urged on by a soldier, slain in the battle and left unheeded.

Viewing the desolation, Prince Bharata, seated in his chariot, spoke to Sumantra, who was driving the equipage : "Alas ! How sad that this city, formerly so gay, to-day appears so melancholy, the intoxicating fragrance of floral garlands and the scent of incense, no longer filling it. O Sumantra, I do not hear, as formerly, the sound of clattering chariots, the neighing of horses and the prolonged roaring of elephants. Alas ! Since Rama departed, the young men of Ayodhya have ceased to adorn themselves with garlands of fresh blossoms and sandalwood and men no longer walk abroad decked with flowers. No longer are festivals observed and the people of the capital are merged in grief ; it seems as if the glory of the city had departed with Rama. O ! Ayodhya is bereft of light, like the night overcast with clouds at the time of the waxing moon. When will my brother, Ramachandra, return like a festival, diffusing joy in Ayodhya, as do the autumnal rains ? Formerly, the royal highways of the capital were filled with richly attired youths, but to-day they are all deserted."

Wailing and lamenting, Prince Bharata entered his father's palace, which, bereft of the king, resembled a cave without a lion.

Seeing the inner compartment in complete darkness, the prince wept aloud, like the gods, when warring with the titans, are afflicted when beholding the darkening of the sun.

CHAPTER 115

Prince Bharata retires to Nandigrama and rules the kingdom from that city

The sorrowing Bharata, firm in his resolve, having brought his mothers back to Ayodhya, said to the holy Guru Vasishtha and the elders :—

" I crave your permission to retire to Nandigrama and there endure the woes occasioned by Shri Rama's absence. The king has departed and my elder brother has entered the forest. I shall, therefore, await the return of Shri Rama, since verily he alone is Lord of Ayodhya."

Shri Vasishtha and the counsellors, hearing the words of Prince Bharata, answered him saying : " O Prince, thy words, inspired by devotion to thy brother, are worthy of praise. Verily, they do thee honour ! Who will dare oppose thee, who art deeply attached to thy brother and who, in this land, has reached such an exalted state ? "

Perceiving the counsellors reconciled to his purpose, the prince said to Sumantra : " Bring hither the chariot ! "

The chariot having come, Bharata, after conversing with his mothers, mounted the equipage with his brother Shatrughna. Accompanied by the priests and ministers, the two princes cheerfully proceeded to Nandigrama, the Guru Vasishtha and the pious brahmins leading the procession.

Then the army, elephants, horses and chariots together with the people of the capital, followed him unbidden. The peerless Bharata filled with fraternal love, carrying the sandals of Shri Rama on his head, at last reached Nandigrama. Dismounting from the chariot, he addressed his spiritual preceptor and the elders, saying : " My brother, Shri Rama, gave this kingdom to me, as a precious trust, verily these sandals, decorated with gold shall represent him."

Once more lifting the sandals reverently to his head, he addressed the people of the capital, saying : " Ye Men of Ayodhya, accept these sandals as symbols of the feet of Shri

Rama. Let them rest beneath the royal canopy and wave the chamara over them. These are the sandals of our supreme Guru and by them will righteousness be established in the kingdom. I shall preserve the trust lovingly reposed in me by Rama, till his return. When he returns to Ayodhya, I, myself, will assist him to put on the sandals. Then I, united with him once more, will deliver the kingdom to him and like a son will I honour him. By restoring the capital and kingdom to Rama, I shall wash away the stigma of dishonour brought on me by my mother. Shri Rama will be installed and his subjects made happy; then shall ill-fame pass away, and I shall win exceeding honour from the people."

Thus lamenting, the afflicted Bharata, with the assistance of his counsellors, retired to Nandigrama and ruled the kingdom from that city. With matted locks, assuming the bark dress of an ascetic, Shri Bharata dwelt in Nandigrama, protected by his army.

Residing in Nandigrama, obedient to Shri Rama and faithful to his promise, Shri Bharata, placing the sandals on the royal throne, spreading the canopy over them and waving the chamara above them, committed the seals of the kingdom to their keeping, he, himself, passing his life as a servant of Rama.

Every matter of import and all the business of state was first laid before the sandals, and every gift brought to the king was first offered to them, and afterwards treated as occasion required.

CHAPTER 116

The holy men of Chittrakuta depart, fearing the coming oppression of the asuras

Bharata having departed to Ayodhya, Shri Rama perceived that the ascetics living on Chittrakuta were filled with apprehension and desirous of withdrawing from that place.

Formerly, these holy men dwelling in Chittrakuta looked for Shri Rama's protection, but now they sought to take their

departure. By the expression in their eyes and other signs, they manifested their misgivings and could be observed conversing secretly in low tones with one another.

Shri Rama, beholding their anxiety addressed them with humility, saying: " O Blessed Ones, has my conduct towards you suffered a change? For what reason are your hearts filled with dread? O Holy Ones, has my younger brother involuntarily injured you? Or has Shri Sita, ever devoted to my service, given you cause for offence? Perchance she has done that which is not fitting for a woman?"

Thus questioned, a great sage, an aged ascetic, his frame emaciated by austerities, tremblingly answered the Ever-Compassionate One, saying: " O Child, bounteous to all that lives, Shri Sita is innocent of any breach of the traditional attitude to any, least of all towards holy men. In truth, the reason is that the asuras, through enmity to thee, have begun to oppress the sages, and therefore, they being terrified, seek how they may defend themselves in secret.

" Ravana's younger brother Kara, who dwells here, is casting out the ascetics from their hermitages. O Friend, he is inexorable and he is a mighty warrior. He is brutal and cannot endure thy presence here. Since thou hast come to dwell in this hermitage, the asuras have increased the persecution of the sages. Appearing in grotesque and terrible forms, they fill them with terror, then to do them further mischief, they fling unclean and inauspicious objects into the sacred precincts, finally when meeting with guileless and pure-hearted hermits, they slay them. Those evil-hearted asuras wander everywhere covertly, till perceiving a sage to be alone and defenceless, they put an end to his life.

"At the time of sacrifice, when the sacred fire is kindled by the ascetics, then do the asuras, scattering the hallowed vessels and ladles, quench the fire by discharging water over it and destroying the utensils. O Shri Ramachandra, weary of these wicked asuras, the sages are urging us to abandon these hermitages and depart hence.

" O Rama, those terrible asuras threaten to slay us all, therefore, we are leaving this hermitage. Not far distant is the wonderful Tapovana belonging to the Maharishi Ashwa;

it is rich in fruits and roots, there we would dwell. O Friend, if it seem proper to thee, do thou come there, for thine oppression is also planned.

"O Prince, though thou art able to defend thyself, thy sojourn here with thy holy consort is fraught with peril."

Hearing the words of Kulupati and perceiving their anxiety to be gone, Shri Rama sought to persuade them to stay, but in vain, and the sages departed. Shri Rama accompanied them a short distance then, taking leave of them and offering obeisance to them, returned to his sacred dwelling. On leaving the holy men, they instructed him lovingly in the path of duty and bade him farewell.

Shri Rama did not then abandon the hermitage, which the sages had deserted. Among them were a few who, inspired by Rama's example, had surrendered their hearts to him, and of them the prince was ever mindful.

CHAPTER 117

Shri Rama decides to leave the hermitage and comes to the ashrama of the Sage Atri

THE rishis, having left the hermitage, Shri Rama reflected on the matter and judged it wisest not to dwell there longer.

Remembrance of his people, his mothers and Prince Bharata who had been united with him there, caused him unending distress. Further, the elephants and horses of Bharata's army had defiled and laid waste the ground, rendering it squalid and foul. On mature reflection, he thought "We will depart hence" and taking Shri Sita and Lakshmana with him, he left that place.

Proceeding further, he came to the ashrama of the Sage Atri, and made obeisance to him, that holy one regarding him with a fatherly affection. He bestowed his favour likewise on Sita and Lakshmana and treated Rama with the hospitality due to him.

The virtuous Sage Atri, ever devoted to the good of all, summoned his aged and pious wife Anasuya, and respectfully asking her to be seated, addressed his worthy and excellent spouse. He said: "Shri Sita has visited our hermitage, do thou take her with thee and receive her hospitably."

Then the Sage Atri said to Ramachandra: "Formerly when rain was withheld for a period of ten years and the earth dried up, this virtuous woman, Anasuya, by her great austerity, produced fruits and berries for the sages and caused the sacred Ganges to descend so that they might bathe therein; thus by her arduous ascetic practices, did she dispel the impediments in the path of the sages. O Sinless Rama, this is the same Anasuya, who at one time, to succour the sages, caused ten nights to be reduced to one. This Anasuya is to be highly revered for her age's sake, and is the object of reverence of all beings. Do thou permit the Princess Sita to accompany the meek and aged Anasuya. By her great and noble deeds, she has acquired immeasurable fame. Let Janaki attend her."

Then Shri Ramachandra answered, "Be it so," and the illustrious prince said to Sita: "O Princess, thou hast heard the words spoken by the sage; for thine own good do thou wait on this aged ascetic."

Thereafter, Shri Sita went with Anasuya who was proficient in every virtue. On account of her age, her physical form was feeble and emaciated, her hair grey, whilst her body trembled like a palm tree agitated by a strong wind.

Uttering her name, Shri Sita made obeisance to her, the gentle saint returning her salutation with great humility enquiring as to her welfare. The aged Anasuya, beholding Shri Sita offering humble obeisance, spoke encouraging words, saying:—

"O Sita, fortunate art thou, that thou art attentive to the duties owed to thy consort. It is supremely auspicious that thou, forsaking thy people, thy individual comfort, thy wealth and thy possessions shouldst accompany thy husband to the forest.

"She who is devoted to her spouse, whether in the city or the forest, regardless whether he be a sinner or virtuous, that woman attains the highest region. Whether a husband be cruel, or the slave of desires, or poor, a virtuous wife will continue

to worship him as a god. O Princess, I have studied deeply and I do not think that a woman can have a better friend than her husband, for he, in all circumstances, protects her.

" O Princess of Videha, those evil women who, enslaved by desire, do not regard what should or should not be done, O Princess of Mithila, they, imprudently commit unworthy acts and becoming abhorrent, fall from virtue. But women such as thou, acquainted with what is good or evil in the world, like pious men, attain heaven. O Sati, thou hast ever been faithful to thy conjugal duty and through thy virtuous acts, undertaken in conjunction with thy husband, shalt attain merit and fame."

CHAPTER 118

Princess Sita receives gifts of love from the sage's wife

THE blameless Anasuya having spoken, Shri Sita, approving her words, gently answered: " O Noble Lady, the advice thou hast given me, is in no wise a source of wonder to me, for it is my conviction that the husband is in authority over his wife. Even if the husband be poor and ignorant, yet women, such as I, should feel no aversion for him.

" But the husband who is worthy of praise on account of his excellent qualities and who is compassionate, self-controlled, constant in his affections, fully acquainted with his duty and who manifests the loving-kindness of a parent, excels all expectation.

" Whatever love Shri Ramachandra bears to his mother Kaushalya, he bestows equally on the other queens, and not this alone, but whoever the king has looked on with affection, that woman he also regards as his own mother.

" When departing for the fearful forest, my mother-in-law, Queen Kaushalya, imparted certain instruction to me, and I inscribed her words on the tablet of my heart. I call to mind also the advice given me by mine own mother at the time of my nuptials.

"O Righteous One, the crowning discipline for a woman is the service of her lord. To-day, thou hast awakened in my memory the counsels formerly given to me by my relatives.

"To-day, Savitri dwells in heaven through the service of her spouse, thou also shalt enter the supreme abode through service of thy lord. Rohini, a pearl among women and a dweller in the celestial region, ever accompanies the moon. Thus many others who have followed virtue, with fixed resolve, enter heaven through their merits."

Anasuya rejoiced to hear Sita's words and kissing her head in benediction, said: "O Sita, much merit has accrued to me by prayer and fasting. O Princess, pure in heart, I desire to confer a boon on thee by virtue of these merits. Tell me what thou dost desire? O Princess of Mithila, thy words have given me extreme satisfaction. Now say what good I may accomplish in thy name."

Shri Sita, hearing the words of the pious Anasuya, versed in domestic duty, and being filled with astonishment, answered smilingly: "Thy loving kindness has already fulfilled my every desire."

Shri Anasuya hearing these words was gratified in greater measure and said: "O Sita, fortunate am I to behold thee! Let my joy bear fruit, ask a boon. I can give thee celestial garlands, apparel and precious unguents to adorn thy person. O Daughter of Janaka, my gifts would enhance thy beauty, they will never fade and they will become thee well. Apply this powder which I now give to thee; thou shalt, by this, augment thy husband's beauty as Lakshmi increases the glory of the imperishable Vishnu."

The princess accepted the robes, powder and ornaments, gifts of love, from the ascetic. The illustrious Sita, having received the symbols of affection from Anasuya, sat down near her with joined palms.

Then Anasuya requested Shri Sita to relate something of moment, saying: "O Sita, I have heard a brief account of thy wedding, describe it to me now in detail."

Shri Sita obediently answered: "Hear me, and I will relate it all to thee. The King of Mithila, that brave and virtuous monarch, Janaka, the protector of his people as befits a warrior,

once, when ploughing the earth to establish sacrificial ground, beheld me like a daughter emerging from the furrow. At that time, the king repeating the holy texts, was scattering the seed of herbs and, seeing my body besmeared with dust, was astonished. Being without issue, he took me in his arms and said, ' This shall be my daughter ', and treated me with extreme love. Then a voice rang out from the heavens, saying: ' O King, verily she is thy daughter.'

" The king rejoiced in my possession and since my birth his prosperity has increased. That sovereign, constant in the performance of sacrifice, gave me into the care of his chief queen, she nourishing me with maternal affection. When I came to maturity, my father grew anxious, like an indigent man who is bereft of all he possesses.

" The father of a daughter, be he equal to Indra, must defer to his son-in-law, whether in status he be his peer or his inferior. My father was willing to submit to this eventuality and was consumed with anxiety, as one desirous of crossing a river, who finds himself without the means of transport.

"After much seeking, he was unable to find a suitable bridegroom and was beset with fears. On profound reflection, he resolved to convene a meeting of princes, that I might elect a husband.

" In ancient days, on the occasion of a sacrifice, one of our royal forbears received from Varuna, a great bow with two quivers that should never lack arrows. The bow was so heavy that many persons together could not move it and no monarch could draw it, even in dream.

" By his merit, my honoured sire had acquired the bow and he, summoning the kings in council, addressed them, saying: ' Ye Sovereigns of Men, I will give my daughter in marriage to him who is able to lift up and string this bow.'

" The kings, beholding the bow resembling a mountain in weight, unable to lift it up, made obeisance to it and went their way.

"After a long time, the resplendent Ramachandra came to my father's sacrifice in company with the Sage Vishwamitra. The king, my father, offered that truth-loving hero together with the Sage Vishwamitra, abundant hospitality.

"Then Shri Vishwamitra said to the king: 'These are the two sons of King Dasaratha, who desire to see the bow. Be gracious enough to allow these two princes to view it.'

"King Janaka commanded the bow to be brought as requested by the Sage Vishwamitra.

"In an instant, Shri Ramachandra, lifting the bow, drew it. Having been bent by the thong, the bow broke in two, creating a sound like the crash of thunder. Thereafter, my honoured father caused water to be brought and offered to Shri Ramachandra and prepared to bestow me on him, but Shri Ramachandra did not consent to accept my hand till the intentions of his own father were known.

"King Janaka then requested the aged King Dasaratha to come thither and he, acquiescing in the matter, did so. With his approval I was pledged to the great-souled Ramachandra; my younger sister, a guileless girl, Urmila, being wedded to Shri Lakshmana.

"O Great Ascetic, thus was I bestowed in marriage and since then have taken extreme delight in ministering to my Lord, Shri Ramachandra, as is my duty."

CHAPTER 119

The holy ascetics bless the exiles who enter the forest

Shri Anasuya, faithful to duty, listened to this stirring narrative and, taking hold of Shri Sita's hands, embraced her, savouring the fragrance of her locks, then she addressed her, saying: "I have heard thy tale brilliantly and lucidly set forth, which thou hast so singularly related to me. O Sweet-speaking One, I would fain hear more of thy story, but the sun has gone down behind the Asatalachala mountain and the lovely night is near at hand. See! the birds who have sought food far and wide all the day, are now returning home to rest. Hark! how they sing! The holy ascetics, too, are returning from their bathing in their wet robes of bark with loshtas in their hands.

The smoke, in hue resembling a pigeon's neck, rising from the Sages' sacred fires is being driven by the wind here and there. The bare trees, scarcely seen in the distance, appear like dense clouds in the gathering darkness. The light is slowly fading in every quarter. See, the rangers of the night are abroad and the deer of the Tapovana forest are sleeping round the sacred altars. Behold! O Sita! The night adorned with stars is come and the moon diffusing her light has appeared in the heavens.

"Do thou go, O Princess, and minister to thy lord, Shri Ramachandra. How fortunate am I to have had sweet converse with thee! O Princess, do thou attire thyself in these robes and ornaments, and thus increase my delight."

Shri Sita adorning herself in the gorgeous apparel, placed her head at the feet of Anasuya and departed.

Shri Ramachandra, that most eloquent one, seeing Sita adorned with the ornaments given to her by Anasuya, was filled with joy. Shri Sita then told him of the liberality of the aged ascetic, and showed him all her gifts. Rare indeed were those gifts and Shri Rama and the great warrior Shri Lakshmana, rejoiced over the bounty of Anasuya.

The night passed and day dawned, the two princes bathed, performed their morning devotions and then approached the ascetics for food.

The pious hermits then addressed Shri Rama and said: "O Prince, it is dangerous to wander in the forest on account of the presence of asuras. O Prince, wandering about in various guises, these beings feed on human flesh and drink the blood of men. These creatures like wild beasts kill and devour any ascetic who is negligent or impure. O Prince, for our sake, do thou destroy them. This path, O Prince, is the way by which the sages go to gather fruit, let it be thy path also."

Then the holy men humbly blessed Shri Rama and he, the harasser of his foes, entered the forest as the sun enters a dark cloud.

END OF AYODHYA KANDA.

GLOSSARY

(*Note:* For Flowers, Trees, and Weapons, see separate Glossaries.)

ACHMANA ceremony—purificatory rite, at which water is taken in the palms of the hands, and poured on the head and breast.
ADITI. Mother of the Gods, representing space and infinity.
ADITYAS. Sun gods, sons of Aditi.
AGASTYA. A rishi, reputed author of several hymns in the Rig-Veda.
AGNI. God of fire.
AHALYA. Wife of the Rishi Gautama, who was transformed into a rock by his curse and ultimately restored by Shri Rama.
ALAKA. The capital of Kuvera q.v.
AMARAVATI. The capital of Indra q.v.
AMRITA. " The Nectar of Immortality " produced by the churning of the ocean by devas and asuras.
ANANGA. Bodiless. A name of Kandarpa, the God of Love.
ANASUYA. A great saint, wife of the Rishi Atri.
ANGA. The kingdom ruled over by King Lomapada, probably Bengal.
APSARAS. "Ap " meaning water. " Yara " to emerge from—water sprites, they were the wives of the Gandharvas q.v.
ARGHYA. A ceremonial offering of water, milk, kusha grass, rice, durva, sandalwood, flowers, etc.
ARYAMANA. Chief of the pittris or ancestors.
ASHABA. When the sun enters the sign Gemini.
ASHOKA. One of King Dasaratha's counsellors.
ASHRAMA. Hermitage.
ASWA-MEDHA. Horse-sacrifice of Vedic times, performed only by kings.
ASWINI-KUMARAS or ASWINS. The celestial horsemen, precursors of the dawn, twin offspring of Surya the sun god.
ASURA. A demon, enemy of the Gods.
ATHARVA VEDA. The fourth Veda.
ATRI. One of the seven immortal sages.
ATYARTHA SADAKA. One of King Dasaratha's chief counsellors.
AYODHYA. Capital of Koshala, the kingdom ruled over by King Dasaratha, probably Oudh.
AYURVEDA. " The Veda of Life." A work on medicine attributed to the Sage Dhanwantari.

B

BAHADUR. A title of honour.

BALA and ATIBALA. A mystical science or magic formulae used for the discharge of sacred weapons.

BALI or VALI. Brother of Sugriva, the monkey King. Bali was slain by Shri Rama.

BHAGIRATHA. Descendant of King Sagara, whose austerities caused the sacred river Ganges to come down to earth.

BHAGIRATHI. A name of the river Ganges or Gunga after the Sage Bhagiratha.

BHARATA. Brother of Shri Rama and son of Queen Kaikeyi and Dasaratha.

BHARATVARSH. Ancient India.

BHARADWAJA. A Vedic Sage, to whom many Vedic hymns are attributed. He received the sons of King Dasaratha in the forest and entertained them there.

BHRIGU. A Vedic Sage, said to be the son of Manu, the Progenitor of mankind.

BHUR, BHUVAH, SWAH. Lower, middle and upper worlds.

BIBISHANA or VIBISHANA—Brother of Ravana, but a devotee of Shri Rama, who conferred the Kingdom of Lanka on him after Ravana's death.

BISHAKA or VISHAKA. A devotee of abstraction of mind, or the constant contemplation of the Deity.

BRAHMAN. The Absolute, The Highest Reality, Attributeless Being.

BRAHMA. The creative aspect of Divinity, Shri Vishnu being the maintaining aspect as opposed to Shri Shiva the destructive aspect.

BRAMACHARI. Religious student, living in the house of a spiritual Teacher, having taken certain vows.

BRAHMACHARINI. Feminine of Brahmachari.

BRAHMA-JNANA. Knowledge of Truth or the Highest Reality, Brahman.

BRATASURA or VRATASURA or VRITRA—An asura slain by Indra.

BRIHASPATI. Jupiter, the Spiritual Preceptor of the Gods, also the Regent of the planet Jupiter.

C

CASTES, the Four—priest, warrior, merchant and those who serve the other three.

CHAKRA VAKA. Brahmany duck or ruddy goose.

CHAMARA—Chowrie, a fan made of Yak's tail, insignia of royalty.

CHANDALA. An outcaste.

CHITRA. The planet SPICA. The month CHITRA or CHAITRA is approximately between February and March.

CHITRARATHA. King of the Gandharvas, celestial musicians.

CHITTRAKUTA. A sacred mountain, the residence of Shri Rama and Sita in exile, still a holy retreat.

D

DAITYAS. Titans.
DAKSHA. Son of Shri Brahma; his daughter UMA was the consort of Shiva.
DAKSHINA. Traditional offering made after a sacred ceremony.
DANAVAS. A race of giants, enemies of the Gods.
DANDAKA. A vast forest lying between the rivers Godavari and Narmada, the scene of Shri Rama and Sita's exile.
DASARATHA. King of Koshala, father of Shri Rama, Lakshmana Bharata and Shatrughna.
DEVAS. The Gods or Shining Ones.
DEVI. A title given to Parvati, Shiva's consort.
DHANUDA. A name of Kuvera.
DHARA. Wife of the Sage Kasyapa.
DHARMA. Traditionally ordained course of conduct, or duty. The Law of Righteousness.
DHRISTI. One of the chief counsellors of King Dasaratha.
DHUMA. God of Smoke.
DHUNDHUMARA. Slayer of the demon Dhundu, a title of the King Kuvalayaswa.
DILIPA. Father of the Sage Bharadwaja.
DITI. Daughter of Daksha, wife of Kasyapa, mother of the Daityas.
DIVISIONS of Time, the Three—Past, present and future.
DRONA. A measure approximating 92 lbs.
DUNDHUBI. The name of a giant, it also means a kettle drum.
DUSANA. A demon slain by Shri Rama.
DYUMATSENA. Prince of S'abra, father of Satyavanta.

GADHI. Father of the Sage Vishwamitra and son of King Kushanaba, hence the patronymic Kaushika.
GANDHAMADANA. A general of the monkey army, killed by Indrajita, also the name of a mountain, "The Mount of Intoxicating Fragrance".
GANDHARVAS. Celestial musicians.
GANGES. The sacred river Gunga, also known as Bhagirathi, Harasekhara or the Crest of Shiva, Khapaga, Flowing from Heaven, Tripathaga, Three-way-flowing, Mandakini, Gently flowing, Jahnavi after the Sage Jahnu.
GARUDA. King of birds, the Vehicle of Shri Vishnu and the Destroyer of serpents.
GAUTAMA. A great sage, the husband of Ahalya, q.v.
GAYATRI. The most sacred prayer of the Rig-Veda.
GODHA. A piece of leather or metal worn on the left arm to protect it from the bow-string.
GOHA. A soft leather, possibly cow or doeskin.
GRIHI. A person who, having finished his education, marries and becomes a householder.

GUHA. King of the Nishadas, a mountain tribe, a great devotee of Shri Rama.

GURU. A traditional Teacher, one who dispels ignorance.

H

HANUMAN. A monkey chief, son of Pavana and Anjana. Hanuman was the ideal devotee and servant of Shri Rama.

HARI. A name of the Lord meaning " Captivating ", " Pleasing ".

HAWAN. A particular offering to the Gods, an ancient fire ceremony.

I

IKSHWAKU. Son of Manu, founder of the Solar race of Kings, who reigned in Ayodhya.

INDRA. The King of the Gods or Devas.

INGUDI TREE. Sacred fig tree.

J

JAGARI. Coarse brown Indian sugar made from palm sap.

JAHNU. The sage who drank up the sacred river Ganges.

JAMBUDWIPA. One of the seven continents of which the world was said to be composed.

JANAKA. King of Mithila, father of Sita.

JANAKI. A name of Sita.

JAPA. Silent repetition of a prayer or sacred formula.

JATAYU. King of the vultures, who fought Ravana when he was abducting Sita.

JAYA. Producer of weapons.

JAYANTA. King Dasaratha's counsellor.

JUTA. The matted locks of a devotee.

K

KABANDHA. An asura or demon.

KAIKEYA. The kingdom ruled over by King Kaikeya.

KAIKEYI. Favourite Queen and consort of King Dasaratha, mother of Bharata.

KAILASHA. Sacred mountain, the abode of Shiva.

KALINDI. Wife of King Asit.

KAMA or KANDARPA. Indian cupid or God of Love.

KAPILA. A great sage, who destroyed the sons of King Sagara.

KARMA. The law governing the behaviour of matter in all its gross and subtle forms, according to the divine purpose.

KARTTIKA. When the sun enters Libra (October).

KARTTIKEYA. God of war, son of Shiva, also called Skanda,

KASYAPA or KASHYAPA. The great Vedic Sage, grandson of Brahma, and father of Vivaswat.

KATYAYANA. An ancient writer of great celebrity, author of the Dharmashastra.

KAUPIN. Loin cloth.

KAUSHALYA. Chief Queen of King Dasaratha and mother of Shri Rama.

KAUSHIKA. Title of Vishwamitra after his grandfather.

KAUSHIKI. A river, said to be the sister of Shri Vishwamitra.

KAUSTUBHA. Celebrated jewel, churned from the ocean and worn by Shri Vishnu.

KAVANDAVA. A species of duck.

KAVYAHANAS. A special class of celestial being.

KESHNI. Chief Queen of King Sagara.

KHARA. A demon.

KHIVA or KHEEVA. Frumenty: hulled wheat boiled in milk and sweetened.

KINDS OF TASTE. See under " Six ".

KINNERAS. Celestial Beings attendant on Kuvera.

KISHKINDHYA. The country ruled over by Bali (possibly Mysore) given to Sugriva by Rama.

KOSHALA. The kingdom ruled over by King Dasaratha.

KRAUNCHA. A species of heron, Ardea Jaculator.

KRITTIKAS. The Pleiades, nurses of the God of War.

KSHIRODA. The ocean of milk.

KUBIJA. Hunchback.

KUMBHAKARNA. Brother of Ravana, a great warrior killed by Shri Rama.

KUSHA. One of the sons of Shri Rama and Sita. (See Lava.)

KUVERA. God of wealth.

LAGNAS. The twelve signs of the Zodiac are considered as rising above the horizon in the course of the day. The Lagna has the name of the sign, its duration is from the first rising of the sign till the whole is above the horizon. Lagna literally means the point where the horizon and the path of the planet meet.

LAGNA-KARKA. Cancer.

LAGNA-MEENA. Pisces.

LAKSHMANA. Son of Queen Sumitra and King Dasaratha, favourite brother of Shri Rama. Shri Lakshmana was said to be an incarnation of the thousand-headed serpent SHESHA who upholds the world.

LAKSHMI. The consort of Shri Vishnu also known as " Shri " signifying prosperity.

LANKA. Ceylon, the Kingdom ruled over by the Titan King, Ravana.

LAVA. One of the sons of Shri Rama and Sita. (See Kusha.)
LAVANA. Son of Madhu, a demon.
LOHITANGA. Mars.
LOKAPALAS. Guardians of the four quarters.
LOSHTA. A vessel of coconut or metal used for begging or ceremonial purposes.

M

MADHUPARKA. A mixture of curds, butter, honey and the milk of coconut, a traditional offering.
MADHUSUDANA. Name of Shri Vishnu, meaning Destroyer of Madhu, a demon.
MAGDA-PHALGUNI. The season from the middle of January to the middle of March.
MAGHAVAN. A title of the god, Indra.
MAHADEVA. Great God, a title of Shiva.
MAHATMA. Great-souled One, title given to a Sage or Rishi.
MAINA. Mina or Mynah, a small percher, about the size of a swallow, which can be taught to repeat words.
MAIREYI or MIREYA. Liquor extracted from the blossom of the Lythrum Fricticosum tree mixed with sugar.
MAITRA. Period of the early morning.
MANASOROVARA. Lake on Mount Kailasha (literally: Lake of the Mind).
MANDAVI. Bharata's wife.
MANDODARI. Wife of Ravana.
MANTHARA. The hunchbacked maid of Queen Kaikeyi.
MANTRAS or MANTRAMS. Sacred formulas.
MANTRA-PALA. One of King Dasaratha's chief counsellors.
MARICHA. A demon.
MARKANDEYA. A sage, remarkable for his austerities, author of the Markandeya Purana.
MARUTS. Storm Gods.
MATALI. Indra's charioteer.
MAYA. The deluding power (Shakti) of the Lord, by which the universe has come into existence and appears to be real.
MEGHA. Regent of the clouds.
MINAKA. A mountain north of Kailasha.
MITHILA. The city ruled over by King Janaka, capital of Videha.
MLECCHAS. Foreigners, barbarians, eaters of flesh.
MUNI. A holy sage, a pious and learned person, title applied to rishis and others.

N

NAGAS. The serpent race.
NAHUSHA. Father of King Yayati. Nahusha's curious story is found in the Mahabharata and Puranas.

NAKSHATRAS. The Hindus, beside the common division of the Zodiac into twelve signs, divided it into 27 Nakshatras, 2¼ in each sign. Each Nakshatra has its appropriate name :—

1. Aswini. 2. Bharani. 3. Krittika. 4. Rohini. 5. Mr'gas-iras. 6. Ardea. 7. Punarvasu. 8. Pushya. 9. Alesha. 10. Magna. 11. Purva-phalguni. 12. Uttaraphalguni. 13. Hasta. 14. Chitra. 15. Svati. 16. Vishaka. 17. Anuradha. 18. Jyesatha. 19. Mula. 20. Purvashadha. 21. Uttara-shraddha. 22. Abijit. 23. Sravana. 24. Sravishtha or Dhanishta. 25. Shatabhishaj. 26. Purva Bhadrapada. 27. Uttara-Bhadrapada. 28. Revati.

(The last used if 22 Abijit is omitted.)

NALA and NILA. Monkey chiefs, allies of Shri Rama, who built the bridge from India to Ceylon.

NANDIGRAMA. The city fiom which Shri Bharata ruled in the absence of Shri Rama.

NANDIMUKHA. Distribution of cows in charity after a sacred ceremony.

NARADA. A great rishi, son of Shri Brahma; many hymns of the Rig Veda are attributed to him.

NARAYANA. A name of Shri Vishnu, " He whose abode is the waters ".

NISHADAS. A mountain tribe dwelling in the Vindhya mountains subsisting on hunting.

PAMPA. A beautiful lake on the banks of which Shri Rama and Sita stayed during their exile.

PARANTAPA. Oppressor of the enemy, title of respect.

PARASURAMA. Rama with the axe, 6th Avatara or Incarnation of Shri Vishnu, the son of Yamadagni and Renuka.

PARVATI. A name of Uma, consort to Lord Shiva.

PATALA. The infernal regions.

PAVANA. The father of Shri Hanuman.

PAYASA. A special preparation of rice in milk.

PISACHAS. Ghosts.

PITTRIS. Spirits of the Ancestors.

POULASTYA. One of the seven Great Sages.

PRAJAPATI. " Lord of Creatures," a creator, title given to Shri Brahma as also to his mind-born sons.

PRAYAGA. The confluence of the Ganges and the Yamuna, a sacred spot.

PUNARVASU. The 7th and most favoured NAKSHATRA q.v.

PURANAS. Legends and tales of ancient times in epic form, eighteen in number.

PUSHA or PUSHAN. The sun.

PUSHPAKA. The aerial chariot used by King Ravana and later Shri Rama.

PUSHYA. The name of the 6th lunar mansion, also of a constellation of three stars.

PUTTRESTI. Ceremony for extending the race by having sons.

RAGHAVA. Title of those belonging to the House of Raghu to which King Dasaratha and Shri Rama belonged.

RAHU. A mythical demon said to cause the eclipse of sun and moon.

RAJASUYA sacrifice. A great sacrifice performed in ancient times at the installation of a king.

RAKSHASAS. Demons.

RAMA or RAMACHANDRA. The Incarnation of Shri Vishnu, and the eldest son of King Dasaratha. It is round this great figure that the Ramayana is constructed.

RAMA-KATHA. The recitation of Ramayana which has been a tradition in India for thousands of years.

RAMBHA. An apsara (q.v.) symbolising the perfection of female beauty from Indra's realm.

RAVANA. King of Lanka, a ten-headed demon who abducted Sita, Rama's consort.

RISHI. An illumined sage. There are four classes of Rishi :—
Rajarishi—a royal Rishi,
Maharishi—a great Rishi,
Brahmarishi—a sacred Rishi,
Devarishi—a divine Rishi.

RISHYASRINGA. The "Deer-horned" Son of the Sage Vibhandaka who married the daughter of King Lomapada, Shanta, and later performed the Puttresti ceremony (q.v.) for King Dasaratha.

RISHYA-MUKHA. A mountain, the abode of Sugriva, the monkey

SADHYAS. Demi-gods.

SAMPATI. The vulture, brother of Jatayu q.v.

SAMUDRA. Lord of rivers, guilty of slaying a brahmin.

SANAT-KUMARA. Mind-born son of Shri Brahma, the Creator.

SAPINDI ceremony. The establishing of a connection with kindred through funereal offerings.

SAPURNA. A name of Garuda q.v.

SARABHA. Legendary animal with eight legs.

SARAYU. Sacred river, the Sarju river.

SATYAVANTA. The husband of Savitri q.v.

SATYAVATI. A sister of Shri Vishwamitra, transformed into the Kaushiki river.

SATYA-YUGA. The Golden Age. There are four ages :—
The Satya or Golden Age.
The Treta or Silver Age.

The Dwapara or Copper Age.
Kali or Iron Age.

SAURA. Literally relating to the sun, a divine potion.

SAVITRI. Daughter of King Aswapati who rescued her husband Satyavanta from the God of death.

SHABALA. The wish-fulfilling cow belonging to Shri Vasishtha.

SHABARI or SHIBRI. A female ascetic, great devotee of Shri Rama, whom he visited in the forest.

SHAKRA. A name of the God Indra.

SHAKRA-DHWAZA. A ceremony in honour of Indra.

SHANTA. Daughter of King Lomapada, married to the Sage Rishyasringa.

SHARABHANGA. A hermit Sage visited by Shri Rama and Sita in the Dandaka forest.

SHASTRA. Teachings of divine or recognised authority.

SHATANANDA. Son of the Sage Gautama and spiritual preceptor at the Court of King Janaka.

SHATRUGHNA. Fourth son of King Dasaratha, son of Queen Sumitra.

SHRI or SRI. A name of Lakshmi the consort of Shri Vishnu. Also a title of honour of Gods, kings and heroes.

SHIVA. Lord of Bliss, He who destroys ignorance.

SHIVYA or SHIVI. A king of the Raghu dynasty who rescued the god Agni who had transformed himself into a pigeon and was pursued by Indra in the form of a hawk, by offering the weight of the pigeon in his own flesh.

SHONA. A sacred river.

SHRUTA-KIRTTI. Wife of Shatrughna.

SHUDRA. Lowest of the four castes.

SHUKRA. Brilliant, bright, name of the star Venus.

SHUNAKA, SHUNASHEPHA } Sons of the Sage Richika.

SHURPARNAKHA. Sister of Ravana, a female demon, mutilated by Shri Rama and Lakshmana.

SIDDHARTA. One of King Dasaratha's counsellors.

SIDDHAS. Semi-divine beings who dwell between the earth and the sun.

SINDHU. The river Indus, also a country east of Koshala.

SINGHIKA. A female demon, who imprisoned the shadows of her victims.

SITA. Literally "a furrow". Daughter of King Janaka, consort of Shri Rama.

SIX KINDS OF TASTE. Sweet, bitter, acid, salt, pungent, acrid or harsh.

SKANDA. God of war, son of Shiva.

SOMA. The fermented juice of Asclepias-acida, used as a beverage or libation in sacred ceremonies.

SOURWA, SOURASHTRA } Countries east of Koshala.

SUCHENA. Son of Varuna, Lord of the waters.

SUGRIVA. Monkey King, a friend of Shri Rama who gave him the Kingdom of Kishkindhya.
SUMANTRA. Prime minister of King Dasaratha.
SUMATI. Younger wife of King Sagara, who gave birth to a gourd containing sixty thousand sons.
SUMITRA. One of the queens of King Dasaratha, mother of Lakshmana and Shatrughna.
SUPRABHA. A goddess who created divine weapons.
SURAS. A name of the Gods.
SUTIKSHNA. A hermit sage who dwelt in the Dandaka forest.
SUYAJNA. A spiritual director of King Dasaratha.
SWYAMBHU. The Self-existent, a name of the Creator, Shri Brahma.

TAPOVANA. A forest much frequented by holy sages.
TARA. The daughter of Brihaspati q.v.
TARAKA. A female demon.
THREE DIVISIONS OF TIME—Past, present and future.
THREE WORLDS, The—Bhur, Bhurah, Swah, Lower, middle and upper worlds.
TRIPATHAKA. Traverser of the Three Worlds, a name of the sacred river Ganges.
TRIPURA. A demon slain by Shiva.
TRISHANKU. A King of the Solar race who desired to enter heaven in his physical form and later became the planet of that name through the powers of the Sage Vishwamitra.
TRISHIRA. A demon slain by Shri Rama.

U

UMA. A name of Parvati, Shiva's consort.
UPA-NAYA. The ceremony of investitute of the sacred thread by which act, spiritual birth is conferred on the youth and he is reckoned a member of the Twice-born (brahmins) class. The age when this ceremony takes place is between eight and sixteen years.
UPENDRA. A name of Indra.
URMILA. The wife of Shri Lakshmana.
UTTARA-PHALGUNI. The twelfth Nakshatra q.v.

VAIDYA. A physician.
VAIKUNTHA. The abode of Shri Vishnu.
VAISHYAS. The merchant or agricultural caste.
VAJA-PEYA. A sacrifice at which an acetous mixture of meal and water is offered to the Gods.
VALMIKI. The Great Sage, author of Ramayana.

VAMADEVA. A Vedic Rishi, author of many hymns.
VAMANA. The Holy Dwarf, fifth divine Incarnation of Shri Vishnu.
VARUNA. Lord of the waters, the Indian Neptune.
VARUNI. Daughter of Varuna,, who symbolises wine.
VASISHTHA. One of the seven great sages. He was the spiritual preceptor of the House of Raghu.
VASUKI. King of the Snakes.
VAYU. God of the winds.
VEDA. The Holy Scriptures of the Hindu religion. Fountain of divine knowledge.
VIBHANDAKA. Son of the Sage Kasyapa and father of Rishyasringa.
VIDARBHA. The country which is probably Birar, whose capital was Kundinapura.
VINA. A stringed musical instrument.
VINATA. The mother of Garuda.
VIROCHANA. A giant, father of Bali.
VISHAKA. One of the Nakshatras (q.v.), also a month of the Spring season.
VISHNU. The divine Maintainer of the Universe.
VISHWAMITRA. A great sage, whose story is told in the Ramayana.
VRATRASURA or VRITRA. See BRATRASURA.

YAKSHA, YASHINI. Supernatural beings attendant on the God of wealth, Kuvera.
YAMA. The God of Death.
YAYATI. A forbear of King Dasaratha, his story appears in several of the great classics, Vishnu-Purana, Mahabharata, etc.
YOGA. A school of philosophy of which the most important is the Adwaita (non-dualist) system elaborated by Shri Shankaracharya.
YOJANA. Approximately eight miles.

AGNEYA. The fiery weapon.
ALAKSHYA. That which cannot be seen in its course.
ARDEA. The web (see Shuska).
ARHANI. The thunderbolt.
AVANGMUKHA. Weapon with head hanging.
AVARANA. Weapon of Protection.

B

BRAHMA-PASHA. Net or noose of Brahma. (Pasha meaning a rope.)
BRAHMASHIRA. Brahma-headed.

D

DANDA or DUNDA. Literally staff. Rod of punishment.
DARANA. To tear or split asunder.
DARPANA. Drying-up weapon.
DASHAKSHA. The ten-eyed weapon.
DASHA-SHIRSHA. The ten-headed weapon.
DHANA. Weapon of wealth.
DHANYA. Rice weapon.
DHARMA DISCUS or DHARMA PALA. The noose of the God of Justice.
DHARMA-NABHA. Of sacred navel.
DHARMA-PASHA. One who has the power of entangling the foe.
DHRISHTA. The active weapon.
DHRITI. Weapon of forbearance.
DISC OF DHARMA. Disc of virtue.
DISC OF KALA. Disc of death.
DITYA. The titan.
DRIRNABHA. Of firm navel.
DUNDA-NABHA. The Dunda navelled.

G

GANDHARVA. Weapon given by the Gandharvas, celestial musicians,

GLOSSARY

H

HAYA-SHIRA. The horse-headed.

I

INDRA. The weapon of Indra.
ISHIKA. The ardent weapon.

J

JYOTISHMA. The luminous.

K

KALA DISCUS. See Disc of Kala.
KALA-PASHA. Death noose.
KAMARUCHI. Able to do what it pleases.
KAMARUPA. Able to assume any form at will.
KANDARPA. Creating sex desire.
KANKANA. Weapon protecting the side (possibly some kind of armour).
KAPALA. A helmet.
KARAVIRA. Weapon of the valiant hand.
KINKINI. A small bell.
KOUMODAKI. Giving joy to the earth.
KROUNCHA. From the bird of that name, *q.v.*

L

LAKSHYA. That which may be seen in its course.
LOHITA MUKHI. Bloody mouthed.

M

MAHA NABHA. Large navelled.
MAHA VAHU. The great armed or handed.
MAKARA. The sea monster.
MALI. The necklaced.
MANAVA. Weapon of Manu.
MATHANA. Weapon that hurts or injures.
MAYADHARA. The great deception.
MODANA. The weapon of inebriation.
MOHA. That which causes loss of consciousness.
MOHAN. The weapon of attraction.
MUSHALA or MOUSHALA. A club.

N

NANDANA. Joy-producing weapon.
NARAYANA. Literally—residing in water.
NIRASHYA. The discourager.
Nishkali. The peaceful.

O

P

PAISHA ASTRA. The ghostly weapon, one belonging to the Pisachas, ghosts or demons.
PARAMO DARA ASTRA. Supreme clearing weapon.
PASHUPATA. The weapon sacred to Shiva.
PINAKA. Shiva's bow.
PISHACHA. Missile belonging to the Pisachas.
PITRYIA. Connected with the ancestors (Pittris).
PRAMA THANA. The churner.
PRASHAMANA. Weapon of destruction.
PRASWAPRANA. To do with inhaling the vital airs.
PRATIHARDARA. That which prevents the effects of other weapons.
PURANG MUKHA. Having the face averted.

Q

R

RABHASA. The desolator.
RATI. Weapon of enjoyment.
RUCHIRA. The approving weapon.
RUDRA. Weapon sacred to Rudra (Shiva).

S

SAMVARTTA. The covering weapon.
SANDHANA. The arm weapon.
SANTAPANA. One of the arrows of Kamadeva, the God of Love, a weapon that scorches and burns up.
SARICHIMALI. That which has force.
SARPA-NATHA. Lord of serpents.
SATYA-ASTRA. The existence weapon.
SATYAKIRTI. The justly famed.
SAURA. The heroic weapon.
SHAKTIS. Powers.
SHAKUNA. The vulture-shaped.
SHANKARA. The cause of welfare—Shiva's weapon.
SHATAVAKTRA. Hundred mouthed.
SHITESU. A sharp arrow.
SHATODARA. The hundred-bellied.
SHOSHANA. A weapon used to dry up water and counteract the VARSHANA weapon, *q. v.*
SHUCHIVANU. The pure-handed.
SHUSKA. The dry weapon.
SOMASTRA. The dew weapon.
SOUMANVA. With a controlled mind.
SUNABHUKA. Of fine navel.
SWAPANA. To do with the act of sleeping.
SWANABHUKA. Rich-navelled.

T

TRIMBHAKA. The gaper.
TWASHTRA. Possessing the power of Twashtra, architect of the gods.

U

USIRATNA. A scimitar.

V

VARSHANA. Rain-producing weapon.
VARUNA PASHA. Net of Varuna.
VATRA. Caused by wind (Vatri " Blower ").
VAYUVYA. Having the power of the wind.
VIDDANA. Weapon that rends or tears asunder.
VIDHUTA. The strongly vibrating.
VIDYA DHARA. Weapon from the demi-gods.
VILAPANA. Weapon causing wailing.
VIMALA. The pure.
VINIDRA. The somniferous.
VISHNU DISCUS. Disc of Vishnu.

W

X

Y

Y. YOGANDHARA. The united.

Z

FLOWERS AND TREES

(*Note :* Many of the following have no English equivalent—wherever possible the Latin term is given.)

A

AMLAKA. A many-branched shrub resembling hemlock. Phyllanthus Emblica.
ANKOTHA. Allangirium Hexapetalum.
ARISTA. Soap plant—Sapindus Saponeria.
ASANA. Indian Almond—Terminalia Alata Tomentosa.
ASHOKA. A coconut-like tree.
ASHWA--KARNA. Vatica Robusta.
ASHWA-LAGNA. Saul tree.

GLOSSARY

B

Badri or Vadri. Jujube plant—Zixyphus Jujuba.
Bhanduka. Calosanthes Indica.
Bhavya. A small fruit tree allied to the Magnolia-sillenia Speciosa.
Bilwa. A citrus fruit used in the manufacture of sherbet.
Burgad. Banyan tree—Ficus bengalensis. L.

C

Champaka. A species of magnolia.

D

Deva Paru. A variety of pine.
Deva Parna. Medicinal plant (the Divine Leaf).
Dhanwaria. A special of twining plant—Echites Antidy Senteric.
Dhara. A variety of Acacia.
Dhatri. Sterospermum Aciderifolium.
Dhuva. One of the Acacia family.
Durva Grass. Bent grass. Panicum Dactylon.

E

F

G

Gulak. A resinous tree, fragments of which are put into the water in a loshta for ceremonial purposes.

H

I

J

Jambu. Rose apple. Eugenia Jamboliera.
Jamnu. Bird cherry. Prunus padus. L.

K

Kamranga. Averrhoa carambola.
Kapitha. Jack fruit.
Karnikara. Pterospermum Acerifolium.
Kasanari. Liquorice plant. Gmelina Arborea.
Kedumbra. A tree with orange-coloured fragrant flowers.
Kujaja. A medicinal tree.
Kuraka. Olivanum tree. Boswellia Thorifera.
Kusha or Darbha Grass. Sacred grass used in religious ceremonies. A grass of long stalks and pointed leaves like rushes. Desmostachya Bipennata.

L

LODHRA. Simplocos Racemosa. The bark of this tree is used for dye.

M

MADHUCA. Illipi butter tree. Bossia Latifolia.
MADHURA. Perennial Jasmine.
MALLIKA. Evening Jasmine.
MANGO. Mangifera Indica.

N

NARCAL GRASS. A species of reed. Phragmites Karka Trin.
NIMBA. Acadirachta Indica. A tree with bitter fruits, the leaves of which are chewed at funerals.
NIPA. A species of Kedumbra tree, *q. v.* Nauclea Cadamba.

O

P

PADMAKA. A kind of fir.
PALASA or PALASHA. Bread fruit. Butea Frondosa.
PANASA. Arto Carpus Integrifolia.
PATALA. Tropical evergreen climbing plant.
PIPPALA. Ficus Religiosa. Sacred Fig Tree.
PIYALA. Chrongua.
PLAKSHA. Ficus Infectoria. Waved-leaf fig tree.

Q

R

S

SALA or SHALA TREE. Sal tree. Shorea Robusta.
SALLAKA. Gum tree. Bignonia Indica.
SARPAT GRASS. One of the sugar canes. Saccharium Bengalense Retz. (S. Sara Roxb.)
SILLEA. A large bamboo. Cephalostashyum Capitatum Munro.
SHINGSAPA. An Ashoka, *q. v.* Dattergia Sisu.

T

TALA. A kind of palm, Borassus Flabelliformis.
TILAKA. A tree with beautiful flowers similar to the Sesamum plant.
TINDURA. Persimmon.
TINISHA. A climber with purple or white flowers.

U

V

VADRI. (See Badri.)
VARANA. Sacred medicinal tree. Cratœva Tapia.
VETRA. Ornamental palm.
VETTAS. Rattan cane. Calamus rotamg. L.
VIJAKA. Citron tree.

W

X

Y

Z

THE

RAMAYANA

OF

VALMIKI

Translated by

HARI PRASAD SHASTRI

Vol. II.

ARANYA KANDA

KISHKINDHA KANDA

SUNDARA KANDA

SHANTI SADAN
29 CHEPSTOW VILLAS
LONDON, W.11
1957

Printed in Great Britain
at the BURLEIGH PRESS, *Lewins Mead*, BRISTOL

Hari Prasad Shastri began the translation of the Ramayana of Rishi Valmiki about 1945, and he completed the work in 1948. The task of editing the translation, proof reading and compiling the Glossaries has been entrusted to some of his students, and the first of the three volumes was published in 1952 and was favourably received by the critics. A generous recognition on the part of the Government of India brought a grant towards the publication cost of the second and third volumes which is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

The second volume of the Ramayana closely follows the pattern of Volume 1 except that it has been decided to dispense with footnotes so far as possible, and to expand the Glossaries. The English equivalent of all Sanscrit words will be found in these, although the names of some trees have not been traced.

The preparation of the manuscript of the third and last volume is well advanced and publication is planned for next year.

Shanti Sadan,
1957.

CONTENTS

Book III—Aranya Kanda

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

Book IV—Kishkindha Kanda

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

Book V—Sundara Kanda

CONTENTS

BOOK III

ARAÑYA KANDA

CHAPTER I

Rama is welcomed by the Sages of the Dandaka Forest

ENTERING the vast Dandaka Forest, the invincible Rama, master of his senses, saw a circle of huts belonging to the ascetics, strewn with bark and kusha grass, blazing with spiritual effulgence scarce to be borne by mortal eye, as the noonday sun is a source of torment to men.

This retreat, a haven to all beings, the ground of which was carefully tended, was frequented by many deer and multitudes of birds and rendered gay by the dancing of troops of apsaras.

Beautiful with its spacious huts, where the sacred fire burnt, surrounded by ladles and other articles of worship such as skins, kusha grass, fuel, jars of water, fruit and roots ; encircled by great and sacred forest trees, bowed with the weight of ripe and delectable fruits, the whole hermitage was hallowed by sacrificial offerings and libations and re-echoed to the recitation of Vedic hymns.

Carpeted with flowers of every kind, possessing pools covered with lotuses, it had been the retreat of former hermits, who subsisted on fruit and roots and who, wearing robes of bark and black antelope skins, their senses fully controlled, resembled the sun or fire. Now great and pious sages, practising every austerity, added to its lustre. Resembling the abode of Brahma, that hermitage resounded with the chanting of Vedic hymns, and brahmins, versed in the Veda, adorned it with their presence.

Beholding that sacred place, the illustrious Raghava, unstringing his bow, entered, and the august sages, possessed of spiritual knowledge, highly gratified, advanced to meet him.

Seeing that virtuous one, resembling the rising moon, with Lakshmana and Vaidehi of dazzling beauty, those ascetics of rigid vows received them with words of welcome and the

dwellers in the wood were astonished at Rama's handsome mien, his youthful appearance, majesty and graceful attire and, struck with wonder, gazed unwinkingly on Raghava, Lakshmana and Vaidehi, as on a great marvel.

Then, those blessed sages, engaged in the welfare of all beings, conducted Rama to a leaf-thatched hut, where, offering him the traditional hospitality, those fortunate and pious men, resembling fire itself, brought water that he might wash his hands and feet. Experiencing great delight, those high-souled ascetics, bidding him welcome, gathered flowers, fruit and roots, placing the whole content of the hermitage at the disposal of that magnanimous hero.

Thereafter, those ascetics, versed in the sacred lore, with joined palms addressed him, saying:—

"O Raghava, a king is the defender of the rights of his people and their refuge; he is worthy of all honour and respect, he wields the sceptre, he is the Guru and partakes of a fourth part of the glory of Indra; he enjoys the highest prerogatives and receives every homage. We, being under thy dominion, should be protected by thee, whether living in the capital or the forest; thou art our Sovereign, O Master of the World!

"Having renounced all desire for revenge, subdued anger and mastered our senses, do thou protect us in the practice of virtue, as a mother protects the infant at her breast."

With these words they paid reverence to Rama, who was accompanied by Lakshmana, offering him fruit, roots, flowers and every product of field and forest, whilst other ascetics, resembling the fire in lustre, observers of sacred vows, honoured the Lord according to tradition.

CHAPTER 2

The Demon Viradha carries off Sita

HAVING received the homage of the ascetics, at dawn Rama paid obeisance to them and followed by Lakshmana, entered the forest, which abounded in every kind of deer and was frequented by bears and tigers.

There, trees, creepers and shrubs had been trampled underfoot, so that the paths were barely distinguishable and the reflection from the pools and lakes was dazzling; no birds sang in that whole demesne, which was filled with the humming of crickets.[1]

Followed by Lakshmana, Rama searched the depths of the forest with his gaze and in that wood, abounding in ferocious beasts, Kakutstha, accompanied by Sita, beheld a titan as large as a mountain creating a great uproar.

Of formidable aspect, hideous, deformed, his eyes sunk deep in his forehead, with a vast mouth and protruding belly, clad in a tiger skin, covered with blood and loathsome to look upon, he struck terror into the hearts of all beings; it appeared as if death itself were approaching with open jaws.

Three lions, four tigers, two leopards, four dappled deer and the head of a great elephant with its tusks, from which the fat ran down, hung from his spear.

Seeing Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, the Princess of Mithila, he rushed upon them in fury, like Time[2] at the destruction of the worlds. Then, creating a great uproar, causing the earth to tremble, he seized Vaidehi in his arms and began to carry her away, saying :—

" O Ye, wearing matted locks, clad in robes of bark, accompanied by a common consort, ye are about to die! Entering the Dandaka Forest, armed with weapons, bows and spears, whence have ye come, O Ascetics and why do ye dwell here in the company of a woman? Perverse and evil wretches, who are ye, bringing disrepute on the sages?

I am the Titan Viradha, this is my retreat and I roam the impenetrable forest, armed with weapons, feeding on the flesh of ascetics. This woman of lovely limbs shall become my wife and, in combat, I will drink the blood of ye both, O Miscreants! "

The daughter of Janaka, Sita, hearing the cruel and arrogant speech of the wicked-hearted Viradha, filled with dread, began to tremble like a palm shaken by the wind.

[1] The Commentaor explains that all this destruction was due to the presence of the demon Viradha and that the birds had deserted the place in fear of him.

[2] Time in the form of Death, the Destroyer.

Rama, seeing Viradha bearing the lovely Sita away, growing pale, said to Lakshmana :—

" O Friend, behold the daughter of Janaka, my chaste consort, an illustrious princess, reared in luxury, held fast in the arms of Viradha ! Alas ! Kaikeyi's desire has been fulfilled to-day ! O Lakshmana, the enthronement of her son did not suffice that designing woman, since she caused me to be banished to the forest despite the love my subjects bore me. Now she who reigns supreme in the midst of our mothers will be satisfied! That another should have laid hands on Vaidehi is the greatest of my misfortunes, worse even than the death of my sire or the loss of my kingdom, O Saumitri ! "

Hearing the words of Kakutstha, Lakshmana, his eyes streaming with tears, hissing like a wounded snake, said harshly :—

" O Kakutstha, O Protector of All Beings, who art equal to Indra himself, since I am thy servant, why dost thou lament as though thou hadst no defender ?

" Pierced by the shaft I am about to loose in my wrath, the Titan Viradha will die and the earth drink his blood. The bitterness, I felt towards Bharata for his desiring the throne, I shall expend on Viradha, as the God who bears the thunderbolt discharges it at a mountain ! With all the strength of mine arm, letting fly this sharp arrow, I shall pierce his breast! May he yield up his life and fall rolling on the earth ! "

CHAPTER 3

The Struggle between Viradha and the two Brothers

THEREAFTER Viradha spoke again, filling the forest with his voice :—

" Who are ye, where are ye going, answer me ! "

Then the illustrious Rama answered that titan, whose countenance was inflamed with anger, saying :—

" Know us to be two warriors of the race of Ikshwaku,

fixed in our vows, wandering in the forest; but now we would know who thou art, roaming here and there in the thickets?"

Thereupon Viradha said to Rama, whose strength was truth:—

"Hear and I will tell thee, O Prince of the House of Raghu! I am the son of Java and my mother is Satarhada. I am known among the titans throughout the world as Viradha. Having gratified Brahma by my penances, I obtained a boon and was rendered invulnerable to any weapon on earth; it is impossible to slay me by thc use of arms!

"Forsaking this fair one, do ye, renouncing all hope, without turning back, go hence without delay and I will grant you your lives!"

Then Rama, his eyes red with anger, answered that hideous demon, the wicked Viradha, saying:—

"Wretch that thou art, cursed be thine evil design; assuredly thou art courting death, verily thou shalt find it in combat; stay but an instant and thou shalt not escape alive!"

Bending his bow and speedily placing two sharp arrows on it, Rama struck that demon with his pointed shafts and thereafter, stretching the cord tight, he loosed seven swift arrows, adorned with feathers and tipped with gold, equal in flight to Suparna and Anila.

Having pierced the body of Viradha, those fiery shafts, decorated with heron's plumes, fell to the ground hissing and stained with blood.

On receiving those wounds, Viradha loosed his hold on Vaidehi and brandishing his spear in fury hurled himself on Rama and on Lakshmana who accompanied him. Letting forth a mighty roar, grasping his spear, like unto the standard of Indra, his jaws wide open, he resembled death itself.

Then the two brothers rained a volley of flaming arrows on Viradha, who resembled time, death or fate, but that terrible demon, bursting into loud laughter, halting and opening his jaws, threw up those pointed arrows by virtue of the boon he had received. Restraining his breath and brandishing his spear, the demon Viradha again rushed on the two descendants of Raghu, whereupon Rama, the most skilful of warriors, with

two arrows cut off that spear, which shone like lightning and resembled a flame in the sky.

Shattered by Rama's shafts, the spear fell to the ground, like a rocky ledge split by lightning. Thereat, unbuckling their swords, those warriors swiftly fell on Viradha like two black serpents, striking him heavily again and again.

Though hard beset, their formidable opponent beat them off vigorously with his fists, but they stood firm, whereupon he sought to lift them from the ground and Rama, guessing his intention, said to Lakshmana :—

" Let the demon carry us along the path as far as he wishes, O Saumitri ! Allow this Prowler of the Night to bear us according to his whim, since he is proceeding along our way."

Thereupon, the demon, proud of his strength, with great energy lifted them up and placed them on his shoulders like two striplings ; then having set the two descendants of Raghu on his shoulders, the demon Viradha, Ranger of the Night, emitting a great roar, strode off into the forest.

Entering that forest, abounding in trees of every kind, where diverse birds filled the air with their song and which was thronged with jackals, beasts and serpents, he resembled a great cloud.

CHAPTER 4

Rama and Lakshmana slay the Demon Viradha

SEEING the two brothers, the glory of the House of Raghu, being borne away, Sita, lifting up her arms, began to cry aloud, reflecting thus :—

' Rama, the son of Dasaratha, who is truthful, virtuous and guileless, is being carried away by a demon of terrifying aspect; I shall become a prey to bears, tigers and panthers ! '

Thinking thus, she cried out :—" O Foremost of Demons, I beg of thee, take me and spare those two descendants of Raghu ! "

Hearing Vaidehi's words, Rama and Lakshmana, full of valour, prepared to slay that wicked wretch, whereupon

Saumitri broke the left arm of that redoubtable demon and Rama the right; thereafter, that titan, resembling a mass of cloud, his arms broken, growing weak, suddenly fell to the ground unconscious, like a mountain struck by lightning.

Then the two brothers beat the demon with their fists and feet and picking him up, again hurled him to the ground; yet, though struck by innumerable arrows and wounded by their swords, the demon did not die.

Perceiving it to be impossible to slay that giant, like unto a mountain, the blessed Rama, the refuge of all who are in peril, spoke thus :—

" By virtue of his penances, O Tiger among Men, this demon cannot be overcome in combat by weapons, let us therefore cast him into a pit. O Lakshmana, as if for a great elephant, do thou dig a pit in the forest for this demon of formidable size."

Having thus commanded Lakshmana saying :—" Dig a pit ", the valiant Rama stood with his foot on the neck of the demon.

Hearing those words, the demon in humble accents addressed that descendant of Raghu, that Bull among Men, saying :—

" O Lion among Heroes, under the blows of a warrior whose strength equals that of Indra, I am dying. In mine ignorance, I did not recognize thee, O Lion amongst Men! I see now that thou art the noble son of Kaushalya. O Dear Child, thou art Rama and this is the fortunate Vaidehi and the illustrious Lakshmana.

" Through a curse, I had to assume the monstrous shape of a titan, but in reality I am the Gandharva Tumburu, who incurred the wrath of Kuvera. That glorious God, being propitiated by me, said :—' When Rama, the son of Dasaratha, overcomes thee in fight, then, assuming thy natural form, thou shalt return to the celestial region.' Owing to my lack of reverence for him, in anger the Lord Kuvera had denounced me for having conceived an attachment for the nymph, Rambha. By thy grace, I am delivered from this terrible curse and shall now return to mine abode. All hail to thee, O Scourger of thy Foes!

" O Dear Child, not far from here, at approximately four and half miles distance, dwells the virtuous Sharabhanga, a mine

of austerity, a great and mighty rishi, effulgent as the sun. Go there, without delay; he will give thee most excellent counsel!

Having buried me in a pit, O Rama, go thy way in peace! Those demons who are about to die must according to a fixed law be buried in a pit."

Having spoken thus to Kakutstha, the courageous Viradha, pierced by many arrows, leaving his body, ascended to heaven.[1]

Then Raghava said to Lakshmana:—" Dig a pit for this demon of dreadful deeds, as for a great elephant in the forest." Having spoken thus to Lakshmana saying ' Dig a pit! ', Rama who was endowed with great prowess, remained standing with his foot on the head of Viradha.

Then Lakshmana, taking up a pick, dug a great pit by the side of the demon, whose ears resembled conches and threw him into it, he letting forth dreadful shrieks the while.

Finding they were unable to kill that great titan with their sharp weapons, those two lions among men, having employed all their ingenuity, put an end to Viradha by burying him in the pit.

Viradha himself, a ranger of the forest, desiring to die at Rama's hands, had indicated to him how he should proceed, saying:—" I cannot be slain by weapons."

Hearing this, the idea had come to Rama to fling him into a pit, and while being cast into it, that all-powerful demon caused the forest to resound with his cries.

Having thrown Viradha into the pit, Rama and Lakshmana, their fears removed, rejoiced in that forest, like the sun and moon in the firmament.

CHAPTER 5

The Meeting with the Sage Sharabhanga and his Ascent to Brahmaloka

HAVING slain the mighty and terrible Viradha in the forest, the valiant Rama embraced Sita and comforted her; then addressing the resplendent Lakshmana, he said:—

[1] The following passages clearly indicate the resumption of the narrative on a later occasion.

"This impenetrable forest is dangerous and we are not its natural inhabitants; let us therefore seek out the Sage Sharabhanga without delay."

Raghava then turned his steps towards Sharabhanga's hermitage and, approaching that Sage, whose soul was purified by renunciation, he observed a great marvel.

In the sky, he beheld Indra, gorgeously attired in robes free from any particle of dust, his body shining like the sun or fire, mounted on a splendid chariot, followed by all the Celestials and innumerable high-souled sages like unto himself, who served as his escort. Bay horses were yoked to that aerial car, that shone like the rising sun and, luminous as the moon's disc, resembled a mass of white clouds.

Rama also observed an immaculate canopy with magnificent garlands and marvellous fans made of yaks' tails with handles of gold of great price, which two women of rare beauty, waved to and fro over the head of that God, whilst Gandharvas, Immortals, Celestial Beings and great Rishis, paid homage to him with sublime chants, as he hovered in space.

Seeing Shatakratu conversing with the Sage Sharabhanga, Rama pointed out the chariot to his brother and bade him gaze on the marvellous sight.

He said :—" O Lakshmana, dost thou behold that dazzling car of great brilliance shining like the sun in the skies ? Without doubt, these are the celestial bay horses of Indra of whom we have heard, who travels through space and who is constantly invoked at the time of sacrifice. Those youthful warriors wearing earrings, who in groups of hundreds, with swords in their hands, stand round him in the sky, with their broad chests and strong arms resembling maces, clad in magnificent purple, look like fierce tigers. On their breasts, gleam rows of pearls, and those lions among men, of handsome mien, appear to be twenty-five years old which is the age at which the Gods ever remain, O Saumitri. Tarry here a moment, O Lakshmana, so that I may discover who this great hero in the chariot really is."

Having uttered the words 'Tarry here' to Saumitri, Kakutstha advanced towards the hermitage of Sharabhanga.

Seeing Rama approaching, the Lord of Sachi, taking leave of the sage, said to the Gods :—

" Rama is coming hither, take me to mine abode 'ere he addresses me ; later he shall behold me ! When he returns victorious, having fulfilled his purpose, I shall readily show myself to him. It is for him to perform a great exploit impossible for any other to accomplish."

Thereafter, offering salutations to the ascetic, in all humility, the God who bears the thunderbolt, the Scourge of his Foes, ascended to heaven in his chariot, harnessed with horses.

When the God of a Thousand Eyes had departed, Raghava rejoined his consort and his brother and together they approached Sharabhanga, who was seated before the sacred fire. Embracing his feet, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, on his invitation, seated themselves in the place assigned to them.

Questioned by Raghava concerning Indra's visit, Sharabhanga related everything to him.

He said :—

" O Rama, that magnanimous God wished to conduct me to Brahmaloka, the region I have attained by the merit of my penances, which is inaccessible to those who are not masters of themselves.

" Seeing thee approaching, know well, O Foremost of Men, that I had no desire to enter Brahmaloka 'ere I had enjoyed thy gentle presence in my hermitage. O Lion among Men, O Virtuous and Magnanimous Prince, having had intercourse with thee, I shall ascend first to the three lower heavens and thereafter to the highest. These worlds of unsurpassed beauty that have been conquered by me, these sublime abodes of Brahma, that are mine by right, do thou accept, O Lion among Men ! "

Hearing the words of the Rishi Sharabhanga, Raghava, that lion among men, versed in the Shastras, answered :—

" I also have conquered all the worlds, O Great Ascetic, but in obedience to my vow I desire to remain in the forest."

Thus addressed by Raghava, whose might was equal to Indra's, the eminently sagacious Sharabhanga spoke again, saying:—

" O Rama, the illustrious and virtuous Sutikshna lives in

this forest; that saint will tell thee what is best for thee to do.

"Follow the river Mandakini, that stream which is covered with a carpet of flowers, and thou wilt reach his dwelling place. There is the path, O Tiger among Men, but stay with me a moment yet, till I abandon this body as a snake casts off its slough."

Thereafter, having prepared a fire and poured clarified butter therein, Sharabhanga, that sage of supreme merit, entered the flames to the accompaniment of sacred formulas.

The hair of the magnanimous one was consumed together with his wrinkled skin, his bones, his flesh and his blood, whereupon, assuming a youthful and splendid appearance, Sharabhanga rose from the pyre like a flame.

Traversing the region where the sacrificial fires are tended by high-souled sages, as well as that of the Gods, he ascended to Brahma's abode.

That foremost of Rishis, of purified karma, there beheld the Grandsire of the World with those attendant on him, who, seeing that sage, addressed him, saying:—"Thou art welcome!"

CHAPTER 6

The Sages seek the protection of Rama

SHARABHANGA having ascended to heaven, the assembled ascetics presented themselves before Rama, the offspring of Kakutstha of flaming energy, and among them were those who had sprung from the nails and the hair of Brahma's body, also from the water in which his feet were bathed; there were those who lived on the moon's rays; those who subsisted on milled grain; those who did penance by standing in water; those who slept on the naked ground; those who lived in the open air the whole year round; those who subsisted on water and wind alone; those who never sought the shade; those

[1] Five Fires.—Four fires and the sun overhead. See Glossary also under Ascetics.

who underwent long fasts; those who practised uninterrupted repetition of prayer; those who gave themselves up to perpetual penance; those who dwelt on the summit of high mountains; those who had subdued their senses and those who lived between five fires.[1]

All these sages, fixed in Yoga, endowed with the powers of Brahma, gathered in Sharabhanga's hermitage in order to approach Rama.

Those virtuous companies of Rishis, having assembled there, addressed Rama, Foremost of the Good, who was conversant with his supreme duty, saying:—

"O Lord of the House of Ikshwaku and of the whole world, Warrior of the Great Car, thou art our defender and leader, as Maghavan is of the Gods.

"Thou art famed in the Three Worlds for thy valour and glory! Filial devotion, justice and faith find their consummation in thee, O Lord. It behoves thee, who art cognisant with virtue, to pardon our temerity in approaching thee in order to make our supplication.

"It were a signal defect for a king to receive one-sixth of the revenue of his people, if he did not protect them as his own sons. Should he however defend those who inhabit his kingdom as his own life or as the lives of his offspring, to whom he is ever devoted, he will occupy an exalted position in the region of Brahma.

"The supreme blessedness acquired by those ascetics who live on roots and fruit is not equal to a quarter of that attained by the monarch who governs his subjects according to the law.

"Do thou become the defender of those countless brahmins who live in the forest who are without a protector, and so defend them from the cruel persecution of the titans.

"Come and behold the bodies of innumerable ascetics of pure heart, who have been slaughtered in diverse ways in the forest by titans.

"They have inflicted great carnage amongst the people who dwell on Lake Pampa, by the river Mandakini and on Chittrakuta. We are no longer able to endure the terrible plight of these sages, brought about in the forest by those titans of cruel deeds; therefore we take refuge in thee; protect us, O Rama,

against those Prowlers of the Night, who seek our destruction. We have no asylum on earth but thee, O Valiant Prince; do thou save us from the titans."

Having listened to the sages, the virtuous Kakutstha answered them, who were rich in heavy penances, saying:—

"Do not entreat me thus; am I not the servant of the sages? It is solely to fulfil my duty, that I have entered the forest. It is in order to deliver you from the oppression of the titans and to carry out the commands of my sire that I am here. It is in your interest and for your happiness that I have come here of mine own will.

"My sojourn in the forest will be greatly to your advantage; I shall slay the titans, the enemies of the ascetics. Let the sages witness my prowess in combat and my brother's also, O Rishis!"

Having yielded to the entreaty of the ascetics, that hero, firm in his duty, accompanied by Lakshmana, directed his course towards the hermitage of Sutikshna, followed by the sages, who paid him every honour.

CHAPTER 7

The Meeting between Rama and Sutikshna

RAMA, the Scourge of his Foes, accompanied by his brother, Sita and the sages, approached the hermitage of Sutikshna, and having proceeded far and crossed many deep rivers he beheld a wonderful mountain as high as Mount Meru.

Thereafter those two scions of the House of Raghu went forward with Sita through a forest filled with many kinds of trees and having penetrated into that dense woodland, abounding in trees laden with flowers and fruit, Rama observed in a solitary spot a hermitage decorated with garlands and bark.

There he beheld the Sage Sutikshna, a mine of asceticism, his hair matted, covered with dust, seated in the lotus posture and addressed him, saying:—

"O Blessed One, I am Rama, who have come hither to

behold thee. Be gracious enough, O Virtuous and Illustrious Rishi, O Essence of Sanctity, to speak to me."

Seeing Ramachandra, the sage, foremost of the ascetics, took him in his arms and addressed him thus:—

"Be thou welcome, O Best of the Raghus, O Rama, chief of virtuous men. Henceforth this hermitage, which thou hast entered, has a protector. I have waited for thee, O Illustrious Hero, and for this reason did not ascend to the region of the Gods, leaving my body here on earth. I had heard that thou, being banished from thy kingdom, had gone to Chittrakuta, O Kakutstha!

"The Chief of the Gods, Shatakratu, came hither and approaching me, that mighty King of the Celestials made it known to me that I had conquered all the worlds by virtue of my good karma.

"All those blessings acquired by the divine sages through asceticism I offer to thee; do thou enjoy them with thy consort and Lakshmana."

To that great and illustrious sage of rigid vows and devout speech, Rama, the master of his senses, replied, as Vasava addresses Brahma, saying:—

"O Illustrious Sage, I myself have conquered the worlds; yet in accordance with the command received by me, I have elected to dwell in the great forest. 'Thou art possessed of everything, yet art engaged in the welfare of all beings', were the words of the ascetic Sharabhanga, that Gautama of great soul, to me."

Hearing Rama's words, the great Rishi, renowned throughout the world, graciously addressed him, saying:—

"Do thou live in this hermitage, O Rama, which is pleasant and frequented by companies of sages, where one may gather roots and fruit in all seasons, where herds of marvellous deer gather without injuring any and come and go enchanting all with their beauty. No harm is to be encountered here, save what the deer bring about."

Hearing the words of the great Rishi, the elder brother of Lakshmana, lifting up his bow and arrows, said:—

"O Blessed Lord, what could be more unfortunate than that I with my bow and sharp burnished arrows should slay

those deer that gather here, and thus give thee pain; for this reason I shall not sojourn long in this sanctuary."

Having spoken thus, Rama became silent and performed his evening devotions; thereafter with Sita and Lakshmana he prepared to pass the night in Sutikshna's enchanting hermitage.

The evening having passed and night fallen, the magnanimous Sutikshna with his own hands distributed hulled grain, the traditional food of the ascetics, to those Lions among Men, having paid homage to them.

CHAPTER 8

Rama takes leave of Sutikshna

RAMA, having been treated with all honour by Sutikshna, passed the night in the ashrama with Saumitri, and waking at dawn bathed with Sita in the cool waters fragrant with the scent of lotuses.

At the proper time, having duly worshipped Agni and the Gods in that forest containing the retreats of the ascetics, Rama, Lakshmana and Videha's daughter, observing the sun had risen, approached Sutikshna with courtesy, saying:—

"O Lord, thou hast ministered liberally to us and paid us every honour, now we ask leave to depart, since the ascetics who accompany us wish us to press on without delay.

"It is our wish to visit all the retreats inhabited by holy men of devout practices in the Dandaka Forest. We therefore beg to take leave of these great sages, fixed in their vows, purified by penance and resembling clear flames.

"We desire to go hence 'ere the rays of the sun shine too fiercely and become unbearable, like one who has usurped royal prerogatives by unlawful means!"

Having spoken thus, Raghava with Saumitri and Sita, bowed down to the feet of the sage, and that Foremost of Ascetics, raising up those two heroes, clasped them affectionately to his heart and said:—

" Go thy way safely, O Rama, in the company of Saumitri and Sita, who follows thee like a shadow. Visit the entrancing solitudes of the Dandaka Forest, where those hermits dwell whose souls are purified by renunciation. Thou shalt see there woods abounding in fruit, roots and flowers, magnificent herds of deer, flocks of tame birds, tufts of lotus in bloom, tranquil lakes abounding in waterfowl, charming mountain springs and splendid cataracts falling from the hills with marvellous groves echoing to the peacock's cry. Go, O Child, and thou also, Sumitra's son; then come again to this retreat when thou hast seen all."

Thus addressed, Kakutstha and Lakshmana answered:—" Be it so!" and circumambulating the sage, prepared to depart.

Thereafter the large-eyed Sita handed those brothers their excellent quivers, bows and shining swords, and taking leave of the great sages the two descendants of the House of Raghu, of unsurpassed beauty, fastening on their quivers and bearing their bows and swords, swiftly set out with Sita.

CHAPTER 9

Sita implores Rama not to attack the Titans

WHEN her lord, the Joy of the House of Raghu, having obtained the permission of Sutikshna was proceeding on his way, Sita, in gracious and gentle tones, addressed him saying:—

" Though thou art noble, a small defect by imperceptible degrees becomes great, but it is always possible to eschew evil, born of desire. There are three failings, born of desire; the first is the uttering of falsehood, but the other two are of graver significance, namely, association with another's wife and acts of violence committed without provocation.

" O Raghava, falsehood was never, nor could ever be, thy weakness; nor yet, O Indra among Men, couldst thou, even in thought, covet another's wife; this fault, destructive of

virtue, was never thine, O Son of a King! Thou hast ever centred thine attention on thine own consort!

"Thou art righteous, humble and faithful to the commands of thy sire; in thee, justice and integrity flower in their fullness. All this is possible to those who have mastered their senses, O Long-armed Warrior, and thou art fully self-subdued, O Thou of Charming Presence!

"The third evil, which through ignorance leads men to bear hostility to one another without cause, now shows itself in thee! O Valiant Prince, thou hast vowed to the dwellers of the Dandaka Forest, whose defender thou art, to slay the demons without mercy, and for this reason, equipped with bows and arrows, thou hast set out with thy brother to the forest known as Dandaka. Seeing thee advancing thus my mind is filled with apprehension and I am pondering how to act in the most profitable manner for thy welfare in this world and the next. Thy departure for the Dandaka Forest does not find favour with me, O Hero; I will tell thee the reason.

"Entering the forest with thy brother, armed with bows and arrows, it may well be that, on seeing the titans, thou wilt loose thy shafts! As the proximity of faggots increases the violence of the fire, even so does the possession of a bow increase the strength and energy of a warrior!

"In former times, O Long-armed Prince, in a sacred forest frequented by deer and birds, dwelt a devout and virtuous ascetic. With the intention of obstructing his austerities, Indra, the Lord of Sachi, in the guise of a warrior, went to that hermitage, sword in hand. In this retreat, he left that excellent sword, requesting the sage, engaged in pious acts, to guard it as a trust. Receiving that weapon, he, fully conscious of the charge laid upon him, ranged the forest, carefully watching over the sword entrusted to him. Intent on preserving it, he ventured nowhere without that sword, either to gather fruit and roots or for other reasons. Constantly bearing this weapon and neglecting his penances, by degrees, that ascetic developed warlike inclinations. In time that foolish hermit, carrying the sword, began to enjoy nothing so much as violence and, losing his sobriety, was led astray and fell into hell.

"This, formerly, was the result of bearing arms! As contact

with fire works change in a piece of wood, so the carrying of arms works alteration in the mind of him who carries them.

" From affection and reverence for thee, I draw thine attention to this matter. I do not venture to instruct thee. Equipped with bows as thou art, I ask thee to renounce all thought of slaying the titans in the Dandaka Forest without provocation. O Warrior! the world looks askance on those who strike without cause. It is the duty of warriors to protect those of subdued soul who are in peril. The bearing of arms and retirement to the forest, practice of war and the exercise of asceticism are opposed to each other; let us therefore honour the moral code that pertains to peace. Murderous thoughts, inspired by desire for gain, are born of the handling of weapons. When thou dost return to Ayodhya, thou wilt be able to take up the duties of a warrior once more. The joy of my mother and father-in-law will be complete, if during the renunciation of thy kingdom, thou dost lead the life of an ascetic. Thus happiness accrues to one who discharges his duty; through performance of one's duty, the whole world is conquered, duty constituting its very marrow. It is by the complete negation of self that the saints acquired bliss; happiness is not born of pleasure!

" O My Friend, with a pure heart fulfil thy duty in solitude; thou art conversant with the nature of the Three Worlds.

" It is through feminine weakness that I speak thus, for who would dare to instruct thee in thy duty? Having reflected carefully on what I have said, do what thou considerest best without further delay!"

CHAPTER 10

Rama reminds Sita of his Promise to the Ascetics

HEARING Vaidehi's speech, inspired by conjugal tenderness, Rama, his energy enhanced, replied to the daughter of Janaka, saying:—

" O Noble Lady, it is in appropriate words, dictated by thine affection, that thou hast sought to instruct me in the duties of my caste.

" How shall I answer thee, O Princess ? Thou thyself hast said : ' Warriors bear their bows, so that the word "oppression" may not be heard on earth.' O Sita, it is on account of those ascetics of severe penances, beset with perils in the Dandaka Forest, who have sought my protection, that I have come hither. Dwelling in the forest at all times, where they live on fruit and roots, they are unable to enjoy a peaceful existence on account of the titans, O Timid Lady. These hermits of the Dandaka Forest are devoured by those terrible demons, who live on human flesh. ' Come to our aid ' was the cry of those excellent Twice-born, and when I heard those words falling from their lips, I promised to obey them and answered ' Fear not ' ! It was a source of the greatest distress to me to see them kneeling at my feet, when it was I who should have been touching theirs."

"'What do you desire of me ?', I enquired of that assembly of the Twice-born, whereupon, drawing near, they spoke the following words :—

" 'In the Dandaka Forest, innumerable demons, assuming different forms, torment us cruelly. O Rama, do thou protect us ! The time of the Homa sacrifice and the days of the full moon have come, O Irreproachable Prince ! Thou art the sure refuge of all the saints and ascetics who harassed by the titans seek thy protection. By the power of our asceticism it were easy for us to destroy these Rangers of the Night, but we are loath to lose the fruits of austerity, earned over a long period.

" 'Prolonged penance is subject to innumerable hindrances, and is exceedingly hard, O Rama ! For this reason we refrain from pronouncing a curse on these demons, though they devour us. Tormented thus by the titans who frequent the Dandaka Forest, we implore thee and thy brother to protect us; thou art our support.' "

" Hearing these words, I promised my protection to the sages of the Dandaka Forest, O Daughter of Janaka !

" As long as I live, therefore, I cannot violate the promise given to the ascetics.

" I may yield up my life or even thee, O Sita, as well as Lakshmana, but I cannot be false to a vow made to brahmins.

"Even had I not promised them anything, O Vaidehi, it is my bounden duty to protect the sages; how much more so now!

"I am pleased with thee, O Sita, for one does not offer advice to those one does not love. Thy words are worthy of thee, O Beautiful One. By pursuing the path of duty thou hast become dearer to me than life itself."

Having spoken thus to Sita, the daughter of the King of Mithila, the magnanimous Rama, carrying his bow, continued to roam through those ravishing solitudes with Lakshmana.

CHAPTER II

Rama visits the different Retreats and hears of Agastya

WALKING ahead, Rama was followed by Sita, while behind her came Lakshmana, bow in hand. With Sita, they proceeded further, seeing many hills and plains, woods and enchanting rivers with geese and cranes frequenting their banks and pools covered with lotuses, abounding in waterfowl, and herds of deer, horned buffaloes in rut, bears and elephants, the destroyers of trees.

Having travelled a great distance, they beheld, as the sun was setting, a marvellous lake, some four miles in length, carpeted with lotus and water-lily blooms, graced with herds of wild elephants and abounding in geese, swans and teal.

From this enchanting lake of tranquil waters, the sound of singing and musical instruments could be heard, yet no one was visible there. Captivated, Rama and Lakshmana began to question a sage named Dharmabhrit, saying:—

"O Great Ascetic, this wonderful music, heard by us all, moves us strangely; what can it be? Be gracious enough to tell us."

Thus questioned by Raghava, the magnanimous sage began at once to relate the history of that magic lake.

He said:—"This lake, called Panchapsara,[1] is always filled

[1] Panchapsara—'Lake of Five Apsaras!'

with water and was created by the penances of the Sage Mandarkini.

"Practising a rigid asceticism, this great sage, lying in water for thousands of years, lived on air alone! Then the Gods with Agni at their head became agitated and, coming together, said to each other:—'This sage aspires to our state!' Thus did they speak, their minds full of apprehension.

"Then all the Gods, in order to destroy the merit of the sage acquired through his penances, sent down five of the most beautiful nymphs, whose complexion resembled lightning and, though the ascetic was fully conversant with what was good and evil, he was captivated by those nymphs and fell under the sway of the God of Love.

"These five nymphs became the wives of that sage, who constructed a secret dwelling in the lake for them. There they live happily, bringing delight to the ascetic, who by virtue of his penances has become youthful. They pass their time in dalliance and this is the cause of the entrancing music mingling with the tinkling of their ornaments."

Such was the strange tale recounted by that sage of pure soul.

Conversing thus, the illustrious Rama and his brother visited the circle of hermitages, strewn with kusha grass and bark, which were resplendent with the lustre of the brahmins. Accompanied by Vaidehi and Lakshmana, the Descendant of Raghu, Kakutstha penetrated into the blessed circle of those Lions among Men.

Received with delight and honoured by those great rishis, Rama roamed through the silent woods, that great warrior sojourning with the ascetics, sometimes for ten months, sometimes for a year, sometimes for four months or five or six months, sometimes for many months or a month and a half only, sometimes three months and sometimes eight. In this way, engaged in innocent pastimes, ten years passed away.

Having visited all the retreats of the ascetics, Rama returned to Sutikshna's hermitage and, receiving the homage of the sages, that Subduer of his Foes remained there awhile.

One day, as he sat at the feet of the ascetic, in all humility he addressed him, saying:—

"O Blessed One, I have heard that Agastya, that foremost

of sages, dwells in this forest, but it is so vast, that I do not know where his hermitage is to be found. Where does the retreat of that sagacious Rishi lie? By thy favour, O Blessed Lord, I, my younger brother and Sita wish to pay our respects to him."

Hearing the words of the virtuous Rama, that illustrious sage, Sutikshna, well pleased, answered the son of Dasaratha, saying:—

"It was my intention to speak of this to thee and Lakshmana, O Raghava and say: 'Do thou, with Sita, seek out Agastya.' Now thou thyself hast proposed it and it is well. I will now tell thee, O Rama, where that great Ascetic Agastya dwells.

"My Child, four miles from here to the south, thou wilt come to the hermitage of the brother of Agastya, situated in a fertile plain, covered with charming groves of fig, abounding in fruit and flowers, where the song of many birds may be heard. Innumerable lakes of tranquil water, carpeted by lotuses and frequented by swans, ducks and geese add to its beauty. Having passed the night there, do thou at dawn follow the path, through a glade, to the south and there thou shalt come upon Agastya's retreat, at four miles distance, in an enchanting spot planted with lovely trees. This place will charm Vaidehi as well as Lakshmana and thee, for this corner of the forest shaded by innumerable trees, is ravishing.

"Shouldst thou desire to visit that great ascetic, Agastya, then set out to-day, O Prince of Surpassing Wisdom."

At these words, Rama with Lakshmana and Sita, having made obeisance to Sutikshna, set out to seek the Sage Agastya.

Enjoying the marvellous woods and hills, which resembled a mass of clouds, and the lakes and rivers to be seen on the way, Rama proceeded quickly along the path pointed out by the sage Sutikshna, and full of delight that magnanimous One said to Lakshmana:—

"Assuredly, this must be the retreat of the illustrious brother of Agastya, that sage of blessed karma, that we now behold. Observe how along the woodland ride thousands of trees, bowed with the weight of their fruit and flowers, can be seen, and the pungent odour of ripe figs is borne on the breeze. Here and there heaps of fire-wood lie, with darbha grass, the colour of lapis lazuli; see also that column of smoke, like a

plume of dark cloud, rising in the forest from a fire freshly lit in the hermitage.

" Having performed their ablutions in the sacred ponds, the Twice-born are offering flowers they themselves have gathered. The words spoken by Sutikshna have proved true O Friend. Here indeed is the retreat of Agastya's brother.

" In his desire to be of service to the worlds, by virtue of his austerities that great sage overcame death and set apart this quarter as a place of refuge.

" Here formerly the cruel demons Vatapi and Ilvala lived, two great asuras who together conceived a plan for slaying the brahmins.

" Assuming the form of a sage, the pitiless Ilvala, using the sanskrita language, invited the ascetics to partake of a feast. Preparing his brother disguised as a ram in a dish, he fed the Twice-born, according to traditional rites. When the ascetics had eaten, Ilvala cried out in a loud voice :—' O Vatapi, come forth.'

" At the sound of his voice, Vatapi, bleating like a ram, tearing the bodies of the ascetics, emerged.

" Thus thousands of brahmins were slain by those devourers of human flesh, who changed their shape at will and were full of deceit.

" At the request of the Gods, the great Rishi Agastya went to the feast and ate up the huge asura, after which Ilvala said:— ' It is well,' and offering the guest water to wash his hands, cried out :—' Come forth O Vatapi ! '

" But as this Slayer of Ascetics was speaking thus, Agastya, that excellent sage, breaking into laughter, said to him :—

" ' How can that demon come forth, since I have consumed him ? Thy brother in the shape of a ram, has entered the abode of Yama.'

" Hearing that his brother was dead, the demon in anger rushed at the ascetic, hurling himself on that Indra of the Twice-born, but the sage, blazing with spiritual power, by a single glance consumed him, and he perished.

" This is the hermitage, beautified by lakes and groves, belonging to the brother of that sage, who in compassion for the ascetics performed that arduous feat."

While Rama was speaking thus to Saumitri, the sun set behind the mountain and the night drew on; duly performing his evening devotions, he entered the hermitage and offered obeisance to the ascetic.

Warmly received by that blessed one, Raghava passed the night there, having partaken of fruit and roots and, when morning came and the disc of the sun was visible, he paid homage to the brother of Agastya, saying:—

" Reverent Sir, I salute thee and thank thee for the peaceful night I have passed here, I will now go and seek out my spiritual preceptor, thine elder brother."

" So be it," replied the sage, whereupon the descendant of Raghu went along the path pointed out to him, enjoying the forest with the innumerable Nirvara, Panasa, Sala, Vanjula, Tinisha, Shiribilwa, Madhuka, Bilwa and Tinduka trees in full flower entwined with blossoming creepers, and trees ripped by the trunks of elephants, where monkeys disported themselves and which resounded to the warbling of a myriad birds.

Then the lotus-eyed Rama said to the valiant and heroic Lakshmana, who was following him:—

" From the glossy foliage of the trees and the tameness of the deer and the birds, we are undoubtedly not far distant from the retreat of that great and pure-souled Rishi of virtuous practices.

" This hermitage that removes all weariness, belonging to the Sage Agastya, well known among men for his virtue, with its groves filled with a rare fragrance, its robes of bark and garlands hanging here and there, frequented by herds of tame deer, the leafy boughs pervaded by countless birds, can now be seen by us.

" Having overcome Mrityu by his power, in his desire to do good to the whole world, he created this inviolate refuge in the south, which is eschewed by demons who fear to lay it waste.

" From the day that this region was rendered habitable by that virtuous ascetic, the demons have ceased to exercise their hatred and cruelty here. This fortunate land of the South, famed in the Three Worlds, associated with the name of that blessed sage, is no longer haunted by those wicked beings.

"The mountain Vindhya, foremost of its kind, that threatened to intercept the rays of the sun, dared not grow higher, submitting to Agastya's command and this enchanting retreat, frequented by deer, belongs to that long-lived one of exalted achievement. The virtuous Agastya, honoured by men, who is ever engaged in the welfare of all beings, will on our arrival accord us a great welcome.

"I wish to pay homage to that great ascetic personally and to pass the rest of mine exile in the forest with him, O Mild One! Here the Gods, Gandharvas, Siddhas and the great Sages, who live on a bare subsistence, constantly pay homage to the Sage Agastya, but dishonest, cruel, wicked and perverse men are not able to remain in the presence of that great ascetic.

"The Immortals, however, the Yakshas and those of the Serpent Race, the great Rishis also, dedicated to virtuous living, dwell here, and fixed in holiness, those exalted beings, discarding their worn-out bodies, assuming new ones, ascend to heaven in chariots resembling the sun.

"There the Gods fulfil the desires of the virtuous, granting them immortality, divine powers and every degree of majesty.

"We have now come to the hermitage, O Saumitri, do thou enter it and announce my arrival with Sita, to the Rishi."

CHAPTER 12

Agastya receives Rama into his Hermitage

Having entered the hermitage, Lakshmana, the younger brother of Raghava, approached a disciple of Agastya and said to him:—

"The eldest son of King Dasaratha, the illustrious Rama, has come with his consort, Sita, to pay homage to the sage. I am his younger brother, obedient and devoted to him and his humble servant; perchance thou hast heard of us?

"We have penetrated into this dangerous forest at the command of our royal sire. We three desire to see the blessed One, do thou make it known to him."

Hearing Lakshmana's words, the disciple said :—" So be it ! " and went to inform Agastya at the place where the sacred fire burned. With joined palms approaching that Foremost of Munis whose austerities had rendered him invincible, he conveyed the news of Rama's arrival to him.

In conformity with Lakshmana's words, the cherished disciple of Agastya said :—" The two sons of King Dasaratha, Rama and Lakshmana, have come to the hermitage with Sita. These two warriors, Conquerors of their Foes, have come to look on thee and to offer their services ; be gracious enough to instruct me in what should now be done ! "

Having heard from his disciple that Rama, followed by Lakshmana and the auspicious Vaidehi, were waiting, Agastya answered :—" How fortunate that after so long a time Rama has come to see me to-day. It was ever the desire of my heart to behold that great prince. Bid Rama welcome and ask him to enter together with his consort and Lakshmana who accompanies him ; let them be brought into my presence ; why has this not already been done ? "

Thus addressed by that mighty muni, learned in the spiritual tradition, the disciple saluted him with joined palms and said : " Be it so ! " Thereafter, issuing from the hermitage, he approached Lakshmana and addressed him, saying :— " Which of you is Rama ? Let him enter and approach the sage."

Thereupon Lakshmana, moving nearer to the gateway of the hermitage, pointed out Rama and Sita, the daughter of Janaka, to him, and the disciple humbly communicated Rishi Agastya's message, conducting Rama into the hermitage.

Rama, accompanied by Sita and Lakshmana, entering the enclosure, which was filled with tame deer, observed the altars set up to Brahma and Agni and also the sacred places dedicated to Vishnu, Mahendra, Vivaswat, Soma, Bhaga, Kuvera, Dhatar and Vidhatar, Vayu, the God who holds the Thread in his hand,[1] the magnanimous Varuna, Gayatri, the Vasus, the Nagas, Garuda, Karttikeya and Dharma.

Escorted by the disciple, he saw all these and suddenly beheld the great sage himself. Seeing him at the head of the ascetics, blazing with the lustre acquired by the practice of

[1] Yama—The God of Death.

austerities, the valiant Rama said to Lakshmana, the increaser of his delight :—

" O Lakshmana, behold that blessed ascetic, Agastya, leaving the place of sacrifice ; it is with pride that I bow before that treasury of renunciation."

Speaking thus of Agastya, who shone like the sun, whilst he advanced towards him, the joy of the House of Raghu took hold of his feet and paid obeisance to him. Having saluted him, the virtuous Rama stood before him with joined palms, in company with Videha's daughter and Saumitri.

Thereafter, embracing Kakutstha and honouring him with water and a seat, questioning him as to his welfare, the saint bade him welcome according to the tradition of the forest. Offering oblations into the fire, and presenting his guests with the arghya, that ascetic entertained them with food and placing himself at the side of Rama, who, conversant with his duty, sat with joined palms, said to him :—

" O Prince, an ascetic who fails to offer proper hospitality will feed on his own flesh in the other world, as does one who bears false witness. O Lord of the Universe, Observer of Thy Duty, Warrior of the Great Car, who art worthy of all honour and respect, thou art come at last and art my beloved guest."

With these words, the Sage Agastya, as a symbol of homage, offered Rama fruits, roots, flowers, water and other things in great profusion, and said to him :—

" Here is a celestial and powerful bow, encrusted with gold and diamonds, that belonged to Vishnu. O Tiger among Men, it is the creation of Vishwakarma.

" Here also is the Brahmadatta dart, which is infallible and resembles the sun ; it is pre-eminent and was given to me by Mahendra ; here also are these two inexhaustible quivers, filled with sharp arrows that blaze like torches and here a mighty silver scabbard and a sword decorated with gold.

" With this bow, O Rama, Vishnu slew the great asura in battle and formerly acquired inexpressible glory amongst the dwellers in the celestial regions.

" This bow, these two quivers, the dart and the sword, pledges of victory, do thou accept, O Proud Warrior, and bear them as Vajradhara the thunderbolt."

Thus speaking, the illustrious and fortunate Agastya gave to Rama the whole panoply of weapons belonging to the mighty Vishnu, and once more addressed him :—

CHAPTER 13

Rama goes to Panchavati on the advice of Agastya

" O RAMA, may happiness attend thee ! O Lakshmana, I am pleased with thee that with Sita thou hast come hither to pay me homage. Undoubtedly the long journey will have wearied you both, as also Maithili, whose sighs betray it.

" That youthful lady, who is unaccustomed to exertion, has come to the forest out of love for her lord, though the way is beset with difficulties ; therefore, O Rama, do that which will give her pleasure.

" Since the beginning of time, O Joy of the House of Raghu, it has been woman's nature to cling to a man in prosperity and abandon him in adversity. Swift as lightning in thought, sharp as a sword in speech, her moods comparable to an eagle's flight, such is woman ! But thy consort is wholly free from these defects, she is worthy of praise and is the foremost of those devoted to their lord ; amongst the Gods she is known as a second Arundhati. That region will be renowned where thou, Saumitri and this princess have sojourned, O Conqueror of Thy Foes."

Thus did the sage address Raghava, who, with joined palms, in humble accents, answered that ascetic who shone like a flame, saying :—

" I am overwhelmed with favour, since the foremost among ascetics is gratified with me, as also with my brother and my consort who accompany me.

" Do thou direct me to a place abounding in trees, and with abundant water, where we can dwell in peace and happiness."

Hearing Rama's words, that excellent and magnanimous sage, reflecting an instant, made this judicious reply :—

" My Dear Son, at eight miles distance from here, is a spot

known by the name of Panchavati, where roots, fruit and water abound and where there are many deer. Go thither and with Saumitri establish a hermitage, living there happily and carrying out the behests of thy sire.

"By the power of my penance and by virtue of the affection I bore for King Dasaratha, I am acquainted with thy history, O Irreproachable Prince. Though thou hast promised to remain with me in these solitudes, yet mine austerities have revealed to me the true desires of thine heart. Therefore I say to thee again: 'Seek out Panchavati!' It is an enchanting woodland, that will delight Maithili. That place, worthy of all praise, is not far from here, O Raghava, and is close to the Godaveri river; Sita will be happy there. Abounding in roots, fruit and every kind of bird, it is set apart, O Long-armed Hero, and is lovely, delightful and sacred. Thou of righteous ways, who art ever active and able to defend all beings, wilt dwell there, O Rama, in order to protect the ascetics.

To the north of the Madhuka woods, which thou art able to see from here, O Hero, thou wilt find a grove of fig trees. Scale the mountain ridges, not far distant, and thou shalt come upon the renowned Panchavati, lying there with its flowering woods."

Hearing the words of the Sage Agastya, Rama, accompanied by Saumitri, took leave of that illustrious ascetic, and having circumambulated him, paid homage to his feet and with his permission departed towards the solitudes of Panchavati, accompanied by Sita.

The two princes, invincible in combat, taking up their bows and strapping on their quivers, resolutely followed the path to Panchavati, pointed out by the great sage.

CHAPTER 14

Jatayu reveals his Lineage to Rama

As he was proceeding to Panchavati, that descendant of Raghu observed a large and powerful vulture. Seeing that bird in the woods, the two illustrious princes, Rama and Lakshmana,

thinking him to be a demon in another form, said to him: "Who art thou?"

Then, in gentle caressing tones, the bird, as though addressing one dear to him, answered, saying: "Dear Child, know me to be the friend of thy sire!"

In deference to this relationship, Raghava paid obeisance to him, and enquired of him concerning his name and lineage, and he, hearing Rama's words, said:—

"In a former age there existed the Prajapatis, whom I will enumerate—the first of them was Kardama and immediately succeeding him was Vikrita, then came Shesha and Samshraya, the father of many powerful sons, thereafter came Sthanu, Marichi, Atri, Kratu who was full of energy, Poulastya, Angira, Pracheta, Pulaha and Daksha followed by Vivaswat and Arishtanemi; O Raghava, the renowned Kashyapa was the last of these. O Hero of Infinite Renown, we have heard that Prajapati Daksha had sixty lovely and illustrious daughters. Kashyapa wedded eight of these damsels of elegant waist, Aditi, Diti, Kalika, Tamra, Krodhavasa, Manu and Anila and well pleased, said to them: 'Do ye all beget sons, like unto myself, who shall be Lords of the Three Worlds.'

"Thereupon Aditi consented, O Rama, as did Diti, Danu and Kalika, but the others refused.

"Aditi became the mother of the Thirty-three Immortals. O My Son, Diti gave birth to the illustrious Daityas; it was to them that the earth with its seas and forests belonged.

"Danu gave birth to a son named Ashagriva, O Subduer of thy Foes, and Kalika gave birth to Naraka and Kalaka; and the five famous daughters, Kraunchi, Bhasi, Shyeni, Dhritarashtri and Shuki were produced by Tamra.

"Kraunchi begot the owls and Bhasi the vultures; Shyeni was the mother of the hawks and eagles possessed of great energy; Dhritarashtri, of swans, flamingoes and water-fowl.

"The beautiful Shuki begot Nata whose daughter was Vinata. O Rama, Krodhavasa brought forth ten daughters: Mrigi, Mrigimanda, Hari, Bhadramada, Matangi, Sharduli, Sheveta, Surabhi and Surasa, who were all endowed with beauty; finally Kadruka was born.

" O First of Men, Mrigi became the mother of all the deer; Mrigamanda begot bears, buffaloes and yaks.

" Bhadramada had a daughter named Iravati who was the mother of Airavata, who is the guardian of the world.

" Hari gave birth to powerful lions and monkeys, lovers of the forest; Sharduli begot chimpanzees and tigers. Of Matangi were born elephants, O Kakutstha, O Best of Men! Shiveta gave birth to the elephants who support the earth.

" Two daughters were born of the Goddess Surabhi : Rohini, and the auspicious Gandharvi.

" Rohini produced cows, and Gandharvi brought forth horses. Sarasa was the mother of the hooded serpents, O Rama, and Kadru gave birth to all other snakes.

" Manu, wife of the magnanimous Kashyapa, gave birth to men, Brahmins Kshattriyas, Vaisyas and Shudras, O Lion amongst Men.

" According to tradition, from her mouth were born the Brahmins, from her breasts the Kshattriyas, from her thighs the Vaishyas and from her feet the Shudras.

" All the trees with succulent fruits were born of Anala.

" Vinata, whose grandmother was Shuki, herself begot Kadru and her sister, Surasa.

" Of Kadru were born thousands of serpents, the supporters of the earth, and Vinata had two sons, Garuda and Aruna.

" Know that I was born of Aruna, as also was Sampati, my elder brother. My name is Jatayu, the descendant of Shyeni, O Subduer of Thine Enemies.

" O My dear Child, I will take up my abode in thy vicinity, if thou so desire it, and keep watch over Sita, whilst thou art away with Lakshmana."

Raghava, having often heard of his father's friendship with the vulture, was filled with delight, and embraced him with affection, paying obeisance to him.

Having requested that powerful bird to keep watch over Sita, he went on towards Panchavati with him, accompanied by Lakshmana, firmly resolving to destroy his enemies and duly observing his daily devotions.

CHAPTER 15

Rama takes up his Abode in Panchavati

WHEN he had reached Panchavati, frequented by wild beasts and deer, Rama said to his brother Lakshmana, who was burning with energy :—

" O Dear One, we have reached the place described by the sage, this woodland of flowering trees, the much-loved Panchavati. O Thou who art full of resource, look about on every side and ascertain in which spot it is fitting for us to construct our hermitage. Let it be in the vicinity of a pool where the charm of the forest and the water adds to its beauty, where thou, Sita and I, may dwell in peace, where flowers, fuel and kusha grass abound."

Hearing the words of Rama, the offspring of Kakutstha, Lakshmana, with joined palms, in the presence of Sita, answered him :—

" Wert thou to live a hundred years, I should still be thy servant, O Kakutstha ! Do thou select some place favoured by thee and command me to build a retreat."

Well pleased with Lakshmana's compliance, that illustrious hero, looking here and there, chose a site which combined every advantage, and on that spot, taking the hand of Saumitri in his, said :—

" Here is a level place that is pleasant and surrounded by trees ; it is here that I desire thee to construct a retreat. Nearby is an enchanting river, rendered beautiful by lotuses, bright as the sun, exhaling a delicious fragrance, as described to me by that Rishi of pure soul, Agastya. This is the delightful river Godaveri, bordered with flowering trees, teeming with swans and waterfowl, geese enhancing its beauty and thronged with herds of deer, neither too near nor too far away, that come here to drink.

" And re-echoing to the cry of peacocks, lovely hills covered with blossoming trees containing many a cave, resembled great

elephants with huge howdahs embroidered in gold, silver and copper, that are studded here and there with tiny mirrors.

"Sala, Tala, Tamala, Kharjura, Panasa, Nivara, Tinisha and Punnaga trees are their decoration, while Cuta, Ashoka, Tilaka, Ketaka and Champaka entwined with flowering creepers and plants, abound as also Syandana, Chandana, Nipa, Panasa, Lakuka, Dhara, Ashwakarna, Khadira, Shami, Tinduka and Patala trees. In this sacred place, this enchanting spot filled with deer and birds, let us dwell with Jatayu, O Saumitri."

Thus addressed by his brother Rama, Lakshmana, Slayer of Hostile Warriors, endowed with great energy, built him a retreat there without delay and constructed a spacious hut with walls of mud, supported by strong stakes made of long graceful bamboos, thatched with boughs of the Shami tree.

Creepers, kusha and sarpat grass strengthened it, while reeds and leaves were also used for the roof, its floor being well levelled.

Then the fortunate Lakshmana, having constructed that excellent hut, lovely to behold, went to the river Godaveri, and after bathing, gathered lotuses and fruit, returning to the hermitage to offer the flowers there and perform those traditional rites proper to the peace of that dwelling, thereafter leading Rama to the hut he had set up.

Seeing that charming retreat and the thatched hut, Raghava, who was accompanied by Sita, experienced intense delight.

Highly gratified, he pressed Lakshmana to his heart and in a voice full of tenderness and feeling, said to him :—

"I am pleased with thee; thou hast accomplished a great feat, O My Brother, for which as a token of satisfaction I now embrace thee. Whilst thou dost still live, with thy zeal, thy devotion and thy virtue, O Lakshmana, our illustrious sire is not dead."

Having spoken thus to Lakshmana, Raghava, the source of others prosperity, began to dwell happily in that region abounding in fruit. And ministered to by Sita and Lakshmana, that illustrious One lived there with them for some time, like the Gods in heaven.

CHAPTER 16

Description of Winter by Lakshmana

WHILST the magnanimous Rama was sojourning there, autumn passed away and the winter season set in.

One day at dawn, the issue of the House of Raghu went to the enchanting river Godaveri to perform his ablutions and the valiant Saumitri, pitcher in hand, following humbly with Sita, addressed him, saying :—

" Now that season dear to thee has come, O Amiable Prince, during which the whole year seems to clothe itself in splendour ! The ground is covered with frost and water is no longer pleasant to drink.

" Having offered ripened grain to the Pitris and the Gods, men are purified of their sins, their sacrifices having been made at the proper season. Desirous of the necessities of life, all are now abundantly supplied with milk and butter.

" Kings, dreaming of conquest, set out on their campaigns. The sun veering towards the southern region, beloved of Antaka, causes the north to resemble a woman, whose tilak mark is effaced. The Himavat Mountain, covered with snow, justly bears its name. Those clear days, when one seeks the sun and flees from shade and damp, are exceedingly pleasant, but now there is only faint sunshine, constant frost, piercing cold and deep snow. The long cold nights are with us, when it is no longer possible to lie in the open, and the Pushya star which served as a beacon is now obscured in the snow-laden air. The moon, that draws its brilliance from the sun, no longer shines, and its frozen disc is dim, like a mirror tarnished by the breath ; wrinkled by the cold, that orb's surface, though at the full, no longer sends forth its rays, like Sita, when her complexion, tanned by the sun, loses its radiance.

" Now that the snow is blended with its breath the west wind is icy, and the mornings are bitingly cold. The woods

are shrouded in mist and the fields of barley and wheat, covered in rime, sparkle in the rising sun, while herons and cranes call in chorus. Fields of rice with ears resembling Kharjura flowers bend gracefully under the weight of the grain.

" With its rays scarcely penetrating the snow-laden clouds, the sun, long after it has risen, resembles the moon, but gradually gaining strength during the morning hours, rejoices the heart at noon, its rays shedding a pale beauty on the earth causing the woodland rides, covered with grass and drenched with dew, to sparkle.

" The wild elephant, suffering from extreme thirst, withdraws its trunk suddenly on coming in contact with the frozen water, and the waterfowl, standing on the banks, dare not enter the stream, like unto cowardly warriors, fearful of setting foot on the battlefield.

" Enveloped in dew at evening and wreathed in cold grey mist at dawn, the trees, bereft of flowers, seem to sleep. Streams are shrouded in fog and the cranes, their plumage hidden under the snow, can only be distinguished by their cries ; the sands on the banks too are wet with snow.

" On account of the weakness of the sun's rays, the water remains in the hollows of hard rocks after the fall of snow and tastes sweet. The lotuses are nipped by frost, their stamens dried up, their petals fallen, only the stalks remaining, and in the grip of the bitter cold have lost all their beauty.

" O Lion among Men, at this season, in devotion to thee, the unfortunate and faithful Bharata is undergoing penance in the city. Renouncing kingdom, pomp and every pleasure, practising austerity, he gives himself up to fasting and restraint, and at this very hour is certainly making his way to the river Sarayu surrounded by his ministers in order to perform his ablutions.

" Brought up in luxury, exceedingly frail, tormented by the cold, how, in the last hour of the night, is he able to endure the icy water ?

" With his large eyes resembling lotus petals, his dark skin and depressed navel, that great and virtuous Bharata, who is dutiful, truthful, restrained, his senses fully controlled, of sweet speech and gentle, that long-armed hero, the subduer

of his foes, renouncing every pleasure, is wholly devoted to thee, O Rama.

"My Brother, the magnanimous Bharata, by living as if banished to the forest, in imitation of thee resident there, has conquered heaven, O Rama.

"It is said that a man resembles his mother and not his father. If it be so, how can a woman as cruel as Kaikeyi be his mother?"

Thus spoke the virtuous Lakshmana in brotherly affection, but Rama, unable to brook their mother being blamed, answered him, saying:—

"She who occupies the second place among the queens, O My Friend, should not be disparaged in any way whatsoever. Do thou continue to speak of Bharata, the protector of the House of Ikshwaku.

"Though I have determined to dwell in the forest, yet my love for Bharata shakes my resolve and causes me to waver anew. I recollect his gentle and affectionate words well, sweet as amrita, delighting the soul. O when shall I be re-united with the magnanimous Bharata and the valiant Shatrughna, together with thee, O Joy of the House of Raghu?"

Lamenting thus, Kakutstha came to the Godaveri river, where he, his younger brother and Sita performed their ablutions; then having offered water to the Gods and the Pitris, those sinless ones worshipped the rising sun and the Lord Narayana, thus purifying themselves.

Thereafter, Rama, accompanied by Sita and Lakshmana, appeared beautiful, resembling the Lord Shiva accompanied by Nandi and the Daughter of the Mountains.[1]

CHAPTER 17

The arrival of Shurpanakha at the Hermitage

HAVING bathed in the Godaveri river, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana left its banks and returned to the hermitage. On reaching their retreat, Raghava with Lakshmana performed their morning devotions and entered the leaf-thatched hut. In the hut,

[1] Girija, a name of Parvati.

that long-armed hero with Sita at his side dwelt happily, honoured by the great Rishis, and shone like the moon accompanied by the Chitra star.

One day, while Rama was reciting the traditional texts, a female demon chanced to pass that way, by name Shurpanakha who was the sister of Ravana.

Approaching Rama, she observed that he resembled a God, with his radiant countenance, his long arms, his large eyes like unto lotus petals, his majestic gait resembling an elephant's, matted locks crowning his head; youthful, full of valour, bearing the marks of royalty, his colour that of the blue lotus and alluring as the God of Love himself.

Beholding that hero, the equal of Indra, the Rakshasi was overwhelmed with desire. Rama was handsome, she hideous; his waist was slender, hers thick and heavy; he had large eyes, hers squinted; his locks were beautiful, hers were red; his whole appearance was pleasing, hers repellent. Rama's voice was sonorous, hers strident; he was fair and youthful, she old and haggard; he was amiable, she sullen; he was self-controlled, she unruly; he was captivating, she odious.

Consumed with passion, the Rakshasi said to Rama:—

"With thy matted locks and ascetic guise, bearing bow and arrows, why hast thou, accompanied by thy consort, come to these woods, which are frequented by demons? What is the purpose of thy journey?"

Hearing the words of the Rakshasi, Shurpanakha, that hero, the Scourge of his Foes, with perfect candour began to relate all.

He said:—"There was a king named Dasaratha, who was as powerful as a God. I am his eldest son, known among men as Rama; this is my younger brother, Lakshmana, my faithful companion, and this, my consort, the illustrious Sita, daughter of the King of Videha.

"Bound by the will of my sire and in order to carry out my duty, I have come to dwell in the forest.

"But now I wish to know who thy father is, who thou art, and what thy race? To judge by thy charms, thou art a Rakshasi! Tell me truly, what has brought thee hither?"

Hearing the words of Rama, the Rakshasi, tormented by the pangs of love, answered:—

" Hear O Rama and I will tell thee the truth! I am Shurpanakha, a Rakshasi, who can change her form at will. I wander about in the forest, striking terror in the hearts of all beings. My brothers are Ravana, of whom thou hast doubtless heard, and the powerful and somnolent Kumbhakarna, the virtuous Bibishana a stranger to our practices, and two others famed for their martial qualities, Khara and Dushana.

" I, who am more powerful than they, having seen thee, O Rama, wish to unite myself with thee, O Lord, O First of Men!

" I am endowed with power and able to range at will by thought alone; therefore do thou become my master. What is Sita to thee?

" Deformed, without beauty, she is not worthy of thee, whereas I should prove a well-matched partner, my beauty equal to thine own; do thou look on me as thy consort. This unsightly, grim-visaged human female, of lean abdomen, will be devoured by me this day in thy presence, together with that brother of thine.

" Thou and I shall wander on the summit of the mountains and through the forests together, exploring the whole region of Dandaka, according to thy whim."

Speaking thus, the Rakshasi threw impassioned glances at Rama, who, smiling, made the following astute reply.

CHAPTER 18

The Mutilation of Shurpanakha

SMILING a little, Rama, in gently mocking tones, answered Shurpanakha, who had been caught in the noose of love, saying:—

" I am already wedded and this is my beloved consort; the rivalry between co-wives would prove unbearable! My younger brother however who is of a happy disposition, of agreeable appearance, virtuous and chaste, is called Lakshmana and is full of vigour. He has not yet experienced the joys of

a wife's company and desires a consort. He is youthful and attractive and would therefore be a fitting husband for thee. Take my brother as thy lord, O Lady of large eyes and lovely hips, and enjoy him without a rival, as Mount Meru, the sunlight."

Hearing these words, the Rakshasi, blinded by passion, leaving Rama, at once addressed Lakshmana, saying :—

" My beauty renders me a worthy wife for thee; therefore come and we will range the Dandaka Forest and mountains happily together."

Thus accosted by the Rakshasi Shurpanakha, Lakshmana, the son of Sumitra, skilled in discourse, smiling, gave this ingenious reply :—

" How canst thou wish to become the wife of a slave, such as I? I am wholly dependent on my noble brother, O Thou whose complexion resembles the lotus, who art pleasing to look upon and chaste? O Lady of large eyes, thou art a paragon, do thou become the consort of that matchless hero. Renouncing that ugly, evil and peevish old woman, whose limbs are deformed, he will certainly devote himself to thee! O Lady of ravishing complexion and lovely limbs, what sensible man would sacrifice that unrivalled beauty of thine for an ordinary woman?"

Thinking Lakshmana's words to be sincere and not understanding his jest, that cruel and misshapen Rakshasi, in the blindness of her passion once more addressed Rama, the Scourge of His Foes, who was seated in the leaf-thatched hut with Sita, and said :—

" Is it for this hideous, evil and peevish woman, who is old and deformed, that thou dost slight me?

" I shall devour her in thy presence to-day, and shall live happily with thee without a rival."

Speaking thus, the Rakshasi, whose eyes blazed like torches, hurled herself in fury on Sita, like a great meteor descending on the planet Rohini.

Then the mighty Rama restrained her, as, like the noose of death, she advanced towards Sita, and in anger addressed Lakshmana, saying :—

" It is unwise to taunt those beings who are vile and cruel,

O Saumitri. Take heed, see, Vaidehi is in danger, O Friend! Do thou maim this hideous demon of protruding belly, who is evil and filled with fury."

The valiant Lakshmana, highly incensed against the Rakshasi, thereupon drew his sword from its scabbard and, in the presence of Rama, cut off her ears and nose.

Her ears and nose severed, Shurpanakha uttered a terrible cry and ran into the forest. Being mutilated, the Rakshasi, streaming with blood, created a terrible uproar, like a tempest in the rainy season and, dripping with blood, that hideous monster, lifting up her arms, plunged howling into the deep woods.

Thereafter the injured Shurpanakha sought out her brother Khara of great might, who, surrounded by a troop of demons, was seated in Janasthana and threw herself on the ground before him, like a meteorite falling from heaven.

Wild with terror and covered with blood, Khara's sister, almost deprived of her senses, related everything concerning Raghava's arrival in the forest with his consort and Lakshmana and the circumstances of her disfigurement.

CHAPTER 19

Shurpanaka tells her brother Khara of her disfigurement

SEEING his sister lying on the ground, mutilated and streaming with blood, the demon, inflamed with anger, said to her :—

"Rise! Tell me why thou art distraught; master thy terror and narrate lucidly, who has disfigured thee in this fashion. Who has dared to touch a black and venomous serpent, stretched peacefully beside him, with his foot? That fool who has thus dealt with thee, is unaware that this day he has swallowed a virulent poison and placed the noose of death round his neck.

"Who has brought thee to this state, thou who art imbued with energy and courage, who art able to range everywhere at will, the rival of Antaka himself? How is it that thou art

found in this sorry plight? Amongst Gods, Gandharvas, mighty Sages and other Beings, who is sufficiently powerful to have disfigured thee? I know of none in all the worlds who would dare to provoke me, save it be Mahendra, He of the Thousand Eyes, who overcame the demon Paka. To-day I shall exact the life of thy traducer with my death-dealing arrows, as swans suck out the milky substance that floats on the water.

"Struck down in the fight, mortally wounded by my shafts, whose foaming blood will the earth drink to-day? Whose limbs will the vultures, drawn by my summons, tear apart and devour with delight when they fall under my blows in combat?

"Neither the Gods nor the Gandharvas nor the Pisachas nor the Rakshasas shall be able to save that wretch from my grasp, in that fierce encounter.

"Compose thyself and in tranquillity, tell me who that miscreant is and who, abusing his power, has ill-treated thee thus?"

Having listened to her brother's words, Shurpanakha, beside herself with rage, answered weeping:—

"They are two most handsome and powerful youths, with large eyes resembling lotuses, clad in bark and black antelope skins, living on fruit and roots, their senses under control, practising penance and the brahmacharya vow, the sons of King Dasaratha, two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, who bear the marks of royalty and resemble the King of the Gandharvas. I am unable to say if they be human beings or Gods. Between them, I saw a young and beautiful damsel of slender waist, adorned with many kinds of jewels, and it is on account of this youthful woman that I am reduced to this plight, like one uncared for and set at naught on account of her infidelity. I wish to drink the blood of this woman and those two youths on the battlefield."

Hearing his sister utter these words, Khara, mad with anger, called on fourteen demons of great strength, equal to Antaka himself, and said to them:—

"Two men furnished with weapons, clad in bark and black antelope skins, have ventured into the inaccessible Dandaka Forest in company with a youthful woman; do ye slay them

and also that wretch herself. My sister desires to drink their blood! O Ye Rakshasas, this is my sister's dearest wish, go therefore with all speed and in your great might destroy them. On seeing the two brothers struck down by your blows, my sister will drink their blood on the field, with joy."

Receiving this command, the fourteen demons swiftly departed, accompanied by Shurpanakha, like clouds driven before the wind.

CHAPTER 20

Rama slays the Demons sent by Khara

THE cruel Shurpanakha, having reached Raghava's hermitage, pointed out the two brothers and Sita to the demons, and they beheld Rama, full of valour, seated in his hut of leaves, in company with Sita, attended on by Lakshmana.

Seeing Shurpanakha and the demons who accompanied her, the illustrious descendant of the House of Raghu, Rama, said to Lakshmana who was burning with courage:—

"Stay a moment with Sita, O Saumitri, so that I may slay these demons who have followed the Rakshasi."

Hearing the words of Rama, versed in knowledge of the Self, that prudent offshoot of the House of Raghu answered with deference, saying: "Be it so."

Then the righteous Raghava, stretching his great bow, inlaid with gold, addressed those demons, saying:—

"We are the sons of Dasaratha, two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, who have come with Sita to the inaccessible Dandaka Forest. Living on roots and fruit, with our senses under control, we practice penance and the brahmacharya vow and pass our days in the woods. Why do you seek to do us injury, wretches that you are? It is at the request of the Sages, that I have come hither to castigate you for your evil deeds on the field of battle. Halt where you stand and advance no further! If you desire to live, turn back, O Prowlers of the Night."

At these words, those slayers of brahmins, the fourteen demons, bearing spears in their hands, inflamed with anger, their eyes red, terrible to behold, filled with a fierce exultation, answered Rama, whose fiery glances and sweet speech manifested a courage they had not seen till that hour, and said :—

"For having incurred the displeasure of our master, the most magnanimous Khara, thou art about to fall under our blows in battle. What power hast thou single-handed to slay so many in the field; it is thou who shalt lose thy life to-day in this conflict. Our arms bearing maces, spears and darts will rob thee of thy strength, and thy bow shall fall from thy hand."

Thus speaking, the fourteen demons, brandishing their formidable weapons, hurled themselves on Rama, letting fly their spears at the invincible Raghava, but Kakutstha with as many arrows tipped with gold cut off those fourteen spears. And that illustrious warrior, full of wrath, taking out more arrows, which had been sharpened on stone, seized his bow and placing them on the string, made the titans his target.

Then Raghava, loosing those shafts, as Indra his thunderbolt, speedily pierced the breasts of those demons, and the arrows, all bloody, penetrated the earth like serpents disappearing into an ant heap.

With their breasts pierced by those arrows, the demons fell to the ground, like trees, whose trunks have been severed.

Bathed in blood, mutilated, bereft of life, they lay stretched on the earth, and Shurpanakha, seeing them thus, blind with rage, sped away, to seek out her brother Khara.

Wounded afresh, the blood coagulating like a tree exuding resin, Shurpanakha fell down before her brother and in his presence set up a mighty uproar, wailing and shrieking, raining tears, her features distorted.

Having seen the demons fall on the field of battle, Shurpanakha, returning in all haste to her brother Khara, described their deaths to him in every detail.

CHAPTER 21

Shurpanakha urges Khara to fight Rama

SEEING Shurpanakha beside herself, lying on the ground, having returned without accomplishing her design, Khara addressed her in harsh tones, saying :—

" Have I not placed those valiant demons, living on flesh at thy disposal, for thy pleasure ? Why dost thou still complain ? They are zealous, loyal and have ever been my trusted servants. Though invincible, even had they to die, they would not disobey me. What is this ? I wish to know the reason why thou art rolling on the earth like a serpent, crying ' O, my Lord '. Why, since I am thy protector, dost thou lament like one abandoned ? Rise, rise ! Let us have no more of these tears and swoonings."

Thus did Khara, her brother, speak to that terrible Rakshasi to comfort her, and she, wiping away her tears, said :—

" When I came hither with my nose and ears severed, drenched in blood, which flowed forth like a river, thou didst console me. To please me, thou didst command fourteen valiant demons to slay the ruthless Rama and Lakshmana. These demons, incensed against Rama, armed with spears and pikes, have fallen victims to his murderous arrows, in combat. Witnessing those skilled warriors, felled to the ground in an instant and Rama's great exploit, I am filled with extreme fear.

" Trembling in every limb, terrified and beside myself, I take refuge in thee once more, O Prowler of the Night, seeing cause for apprehension on every side. Submerged as I am in the infinite ocean of distress, haunted by the crocodiles of affliction and the billows of fear, wilt thou not rescue me ? Under Rama's fiery arrows, the demons, eaters of flesh, who followed me, are lying on the ground.

" If thou hast any pity for me and for these demons, if thou art possessed of the courage and strength to meet Rama in

battle, then, O Prowler of the Night, slay this thorn in the side of the demons, who has set up his hermitage in the Dandaka Forest.

"If thou dost not bring about the death of Rama, the Slayer of his Foes, this very day, I shall yield up my life in thy presence, dishonoured. I see clearly, that even supported by thy forces, thou art not able to meet Rama in pitched battle.

"Thou deemest thyself to be a great hero, but thou art not really so, thy prowess exists only in thine own conceited imaginings; therefore do thou leave Janasthana, in all haste, with thy companions, O Stigma of Thy Race! Do thou return victor in the struggle, for, if thou hast neither the strength, nor the valour to slay these two men, how canst thou remain here?

"Defeated by Rama's prowess, thou wilt surely die, for he is truly brave, that son of Dasaratha, Rama, and his brother also, who disfigured me is supremely valiant!"

Thus, in the presence of her brother, did that Rakshasi lament again and again, beating her breast and, overcome with mortification, lost consciousness. Then, after a space coming to her senses, exercised with grief, she continued to cry out and strike her breast with her hands.

CHAPTER 22

Khara and his fourteen thousand Demons march against Rama

LISTENING to Shurpanakha's reproaches, Khara, burning with anger, seated amidst his warriors, answered fiercely:—

"Thy contempt incites me to ungovernable fury, I am beside myself and can no more endure this than it is possible to support salt poured into a wound. I hold Rama to be of no account and regard him as already dead. His offence will bring about his end this day; therefore restrain thy tears, do not distress thyself further. I shall despatch Rama and his brother to the region of death, and thou, O Rakshasi,

shalt to-day drink the warm blood of that one of evil deeds struck down by mine axe."

Overjoyed on hearing these words, falling from her brother's lips, Shurpanakha, in her folly, began to praise Khara, the Foremost of Titans.

First condemned, then extolled by her, Khara called on Dushana, the commander of his army, saying :—

"O Friend, make ready fourteen thousand trained titans who are obedient to my commands, full of martial ardour, who never retreat in battle, who resemble thunder clouds and who revel in cruelty and delight in slaying men.

"Do thou, with all speed, bring my chariot also, with bows, arrows, glittering swords, darts and javelins, that have been well sharpened. I wish to place myself at the head of those magnanimous titans, in order to slay the haughty Rama, O Skilful Warrior!"

As he was speaking, Dushana harnessed excellent horses to the great car, that shone like the sun, whereupon Khara ascended the chariot resembling the peak of Meru, that was vast, inlaid with pure gold, with golden wheels and shafts set with emeralds. Decorated with symbols of good fortune, such as fish, flowers, trees, rocks, mountains, birds and stars, it was furnished with banners and spears, hung with delightful bells and yoked to excellent steeds.

Then Khara, chafing with impatience, as also Dushana, seeing that great host, furnished with chariots, shields, weapons and banners, cried to that multitude of demons :—"Advance!"

Thereafter that mighty titan army, numbering fourteen thousand, equipped with formidable shields, weapons and banners, rushed out impetuously, amidst a great tumult.

Armed with hammers, picks, spears, sharp axes, sabres, discus and shining javelins, as well as darts, formidable clubs, immense bows, goads, swords, maces and thunderbolts, terrible to look upon, those ferocious titans, obedient to the commands of Khara, left Janasthana, and he, withdrawing himself a little, reviewed those titans of malignant aspect, who were rushing forth, and thereafter followed them.

Obedient to Khara's command, the charioteer mounted on the car of that Slayer of His Foes, spurring on his dappled

steeds, whose harness was wrought with pure gold, advanced with all speed, causing the cardinal points and other regions to ring with the sound.

And Khara, in harsh tones, inflamed with anger, chafing with the desire to destroy his adversary, endowed with great strength, equal to Antaka, urged on his charioteer again and again, roaring like a great cloud about to let loose a stream of hail.

CHAPTER 23

The Titan Army advances amid evil Portents

At that time terrible portents appeared and from a dark cloud a shower of blood fell. The swift-footed steeds yoked to Khara's chariot, stumbled on the level road of the royal highway, strewn with flowers; the sun was covered with a black disc, edged, as it were with blood, like a circle of burning coals, whilst a frightful vulture settled on the standard with its golden support.

Birds and beasts of prey, roaming in the vicinity of Janasthana, emitted deafening cries, creating an appalling clamour, and near that region, terrible jackals gave forth fearful and blood-curdling howls, like fiends.

Immense and formidable thunderclouds resembling elephants with crushed Temples, showered down a rain of blood, which hid the entire firmament; a great darkness fell, causing the hair to stand on end, obscuring the four quarters. Dusk arrived before the appointed time, assuming a sanguinous hue and, as Khara proceeded, wild beasts and birds of terrifying aspect barred his path, whilst herons, hyenas and vultures raised a ghastly clamour.

Hideous jackals, a sign of misfortune in war, howled at the approaching army, flames darting from their jaws and a headless trunk, resembling a club, was seen close to the sun. Though the time of eclipse had not come, yet that golden orb was seized by the planet Swarbhanu; the winds blew violently

and the sun was bereft of lustre; though not yet night, stars thick as fireflies appeared.

Birds and fishes dived into the depths of the lakes, on which the lotuses had withered, and in that hour the trees were bereft of flowers and fruit, and sombre dust-clouds arose without the stirring of the wind. Parrots called wildly 'Chichikuchi' and comets of sinister aspect fell without a sound; the earth with her mountains, woods and forests, shook.

As Khara, standing in his chariot, was raising his war-cry, his left arm twitched and his voice died away; glancing round on every side, his eyes were suffused with tears, his head throbbed, yet in his folly he did not turn back.

Witnessing these evil portents that caused his hair to stand on end, with a defiant laugh, Khara addressed that host of titans saying:—

"I hold these terrible portents, dreadful to behold, as nought compared with my power and disregard them as do the strong, the weak! I am able to shoot down the stars from heaven with my sharp arrows! I can subjugate the empire of death itself! Till by means of my powerful weapons, I have brought Rama low, who depends on his strength alone, as also Lakshmana, I shall not turn back. May my sister, for whose sake I have sworn to bring about the death of Rama and Lakshmana, drink the blood of these two. Till this hour, I have not known defeat on the field of battle; ye are witness to it, I do not utter falsehood! In my wrath I am able to slay the Chief of the Gods bearing the thunderbolt, mounted on the intoxicated Airavata, how much more am I able to slay these two mortals?"

Hearing those boastful words, the vast army of the titans, whom death already held in his noose, was filled with incomparable joy, and advanced full of vigour, anxious to join issue in battle.

Thereupon, the high-souled Rishis, Devas, Gandharvas and Charanas assembled and those virtuous beings said one to the other:—

"Reverence to the cows, the brahmins and all those who have acquired spiritual merit in the world!

"As Vishnu, bearing the discus in his hand, subdued the Asuras, so may Rama too triumph over the titans in this fight."

Repeatedly expressing this wish and many others, those illustrious Rishis and the Gods, stationed in the sky, gazed down on the army of the titans, that was about to be destroyed.

Then Khara in his swiftly-moving chariot rode out to the head of his army and those twelve of exceeding prowess: Karaviraksha, Parusha, Kalakarmukha, Hemamalin, Mahamalin, Sarpasya, Shyengamin, Prithugriva, Vajnashatru, Vihangama, Dirjaya, Krudhirashana, surrounded him, and Mahakapala, Sthulaksha, Pramatha and Trishiras, these four followed Dushana.

As a group of planets rush towards the sun or moon, so in their eagerness to enter the fight did that formidable army of of titans hurl themselves with tremendous impetus on the two princes.

CHAPTER 24

The Combat opens between Rama and the Titans

WHEN Khara of great prowess advanced on Rama's hermitage, the two princes observed many dreadful portents, and Rama, deeply moved, said to Lakshmana :—" O Mighty-armed One, these inauspicious omens, causing terror to all beings, foretell the destruction of the demon hosts.

"Yonder dun-coloured clouds, resembling asses' skin, pass across the sky, raining blood in dreadful convulsions. Behold, O Lakshmana, smoke rising from mine arrows, as if they rejoiced at the coming contest, and my bow of beaten gold moving of itself, eager for action. Meseems the cry of wild birds that frequent the woods foretells danger, nay, that the very lives of our foes are in jeopardy. Assuredly a great battle will shortly take place ; the twitching of my left arm betokens it. O Hero, for us victory is imminent, and the defeat of the titans assured. Thy countenance is resplendent and exultant,

O Lakshmana! Those warriors who enter into combat with a rueful mien are lost.

"I hear the roar of those titans of cruel deeds and the sound of their drums. If a prudent man desires success and wishes to escape defeat, he should be forearmed against the future. Therefore, bearing thy bow and arrows, taking Sita with thee, repair to a mountain cave, screened by trees and difficult of access. O Lakshmana, do not oppose my commands, but, swearing obedience to my feet, go thither, O Friend, without delay. Thou art valiant and well able to strike down the titans, but I desire to slay these Prowlers of the Night single-handed."

Having spoken thus, Lakshmana, taking up his bow and arrows, withdrew with Sita to an inaccessible cave.

As Lakshmana entered the cavern with Sita, Rama rejoiced at his brother's submission and donned his coat of mail.

Clothed in armour that shone like fire, Rama resembled a mighty flame illumining the darkness, and that hero, standing erect, took up his bow and arrows and, by the twanging of the cord, caused the four cardinal points to re-echo.

Then the Gods, Gandharvas, Siddhas and Charanas gathered together to witness the struggle and the great-souled Rishis began to converse one with the other, saying :—

"May it be well with all the cows and brahmins found on the earth ! May Raghava overcome the descendants of Poulastya in combat! May he be as victorious as Vishnu, who with his discus routed the foremost of the asuras!"

Having spoken thus, exchanging glances, they added :— "But how can Rama overcome those fourteen thousand demons of fearful deeds single-handed?"

Thereafter those Rajarishis and Siddhas, stationed in their aerial chariots, were moved with curiosity as to the outcome of the conflict and seeing Rama, splendidly accoutred, standing alone on the field of battle, all those beings were filled with apprehension; the peerless Rama, however, the doer of noble deeds, assumed the aspect of that high-souled and avenging God, Rudra!

Whilst the Gods, Gandharvas and Charanas were still conversing, the army of the titans, creating a fearful clamour,

clad in mail, bearing weapons and banners, appeared on every side.

Uttering loud battle cries, jostling one another, twanging their bowstrings, opening their jaws wide, they shouted :— " We will destroy the enemy ! " This appalling tumult filled the forest and struck terror into the hearts of its denizens, who fled from the sound, not daring to look back.

Then the demon army, resembling a stormy sea, brandishing every kind of weapon, rapidly approached Rama, but he, an experienced warrior, looking round on every side, saw that army of Khara's advancing and went out to meet it, taking his arrows from their quiver and stretching his dread bow, letting forth a piercing shout presaging the death of the titans.

Dreadful to behold in his wrath, he resembled the fire at the dissolution of the world and seeing him filled with energy the forest deities fled away. In his anger, Rama resembled the Bearer of the Pinaka bow intent on destroying Daksha's sacrifice.

With their bows and weapons, their cars and their armour, which shone like fire, the hosts of those eaters of human flesh resembled a mass of dark clouds at the hour of sunrise.

CHAPTER 25

The Combat between Rama and the Titans continues

APPROACHING the hermitage, Khara, in company with those who preceded him, beheld Rama, the Destroyer of his Foes, full of wrath, armed with his bow and seeing that mighty warrior, bow in hand, Khara ordered his charioteer to drive upon him with his car.

Thus commanded, Suta drove his horses to where the illustrious Rama, wielding his bow, stood unmoved.

Beholding Khara advancing on Rama, the titans, uttering loud shouts, surrounded him on all sides, and he, stationed

in his chariot amidst those Yatudhanas, resembled the planet Mars encircled by stars.

Loosing a thousand shafts, Khara emitted a tremendous war-cry and all the demons in fury showered various missiles on that invincible archer Rama, striking him in their frenzy with iron clubs, swords, spears and axes.

With their colossal stature and extraordinary power, they resembled mountains as they bore down on Kakutstha with their chariots and horses.

In their desire to overcome Rama, those demon hordes, mounted on elephants as high as the peaks of mountains, covered him with a hail of weapons, like great clouds letting loose their rain on the King of Mountains, and Raghava was hemmed in on all sides by those ferocious looking demons.

As at evening time Mahadeva is surrounded by his satellites, so was Rama beset by the lances of the titans, but that prince received the missiles hurled against him as the sea receives the rivers that empty themselves therein. As the Himalayas remain unmoved, when struck by lightning, so did he, when those dreadful weapons tore his flesh. Pierced in every limb, the blood gushing forth on all sides, he resembled the evening sun enveloped in cloud.

Beholding Rama encircled by thousands of titans, the Gods and sages were profoundly moved, but he, growing enraged, bending his bow like a sickle, let loose hundreds and thousands of pointed shafts, that could not be intercepted and carried death to those they pierced. As if in sport, on the battlefield Rama let fly countless arrows furnished with herons plumes, tipped with gold, destroying innumerable titans like the noose of death itself.

Unconcernedly loosed by Rama, those arrows passed through the demons' bodies and, stained with blood, flew through the air like blazing torches. Countless shafts drawn from Rama's quiver fell in hundreds and thousands, robbing the demons of their life's breath, their bows, their banners, their shields and their armour, their arms embellished with ornaments and their thighs resembling the trunks of elephants.

The arrows of Rama, discharged from the bowstring, cut down horses yoked to the chariots with their golden trappings

together with the charioteers; elephants with their riders, horsemen with their steeds, were all transfixed by his shafts and despatched to the region of Yama.

Pierced by those pointed shafts, the Rangers of the Night, emitted terrible shrieks, and decimated by those death-dealing arrows, the demon host was unable to defend itself, as dried wood is ignited by the proximity of fire.

Then certain demon warriors, full of energy and zeal, in a paroxysm of rage, let fly lances, tridents and other weapons at Rama, but he, intercepting them, cut off the heads of those demons with his shafts, thus depriving them of their lives. They, having had their heads, their shields and their bowstrings severed, fell to the earth, like trees thrown down by the blast of Garuda's wings.

Then the remaining titans fled, seeking refuge from those death-dealing arrows with Khara, but Dushana, taking up his bow, rallied them and rushed on Rama as if he were Antaka himself; thereafter the titans, growing bolder, hurled themselves on Rama anew, armed with the trunks of Sala and Tala trees and huge rocks.

With lances, maces and snares, bearing darts, clubs and nooses in their hands, those great warriors covered the whole field with a hail of missiles, discharging volleys of trees and rocks. Thereafter the combat waxed furious, causing the hair to stand on end, and now it seemed as if Rama were the victor and again the demons appeared to triumph. Then, seeing himself beseiged on all sides, that mighty warrior Rama, covered by a hail of darts, sent up a terrific shout, placing the mantra-propelled Gandharva weapon on his bow, whereupon a thousand arrows sped from his bent bow, covering the ten regions.

With such skill did Rama discharge his arrows, that the demons were unable to distinguish when he drew them from their quiver and when he loosed them and his shafts caused darkness to spread over the sky and obscure the sun.

Slain in their thousands, the demons fell in heaps and the battlefield was strewn with corpses. Struck down, disembowelled, transfixed, torn and hacked asunder, they could be seen in their hundreds, and the ground was scattered with

heads wrapped in turbans, arms encircled with bangles, thighs and torsos with their ornaments, horses, mighty elephants, shattered chariots, chowries, fans, umbrellas and standards of every kind, and beholding the slain, the remaining demons were afflicted and unable to withstand Rama, that captor of hostile citadels, further.

CHAPTER 26

Rama destroys the Titans and slays Dushana

SEEING his forces destroyed, the mighty-armed Dushana placed himself at the head of five thousand intrepid and invincible titans, to whom retreat was unknown.

Armed with pikes, sabres, rocks and trees, they let loose a hail of missiles on Rama from every side, without being able to wound him. Their onslaught was formidable and to all but Rama, deadly. The virtuous Raghava, however, met the attack with his arrows, his eyes closed, as unconcerned as a bull under heavy rain. Thereafter, growing wrath, he resolved to destroy the whole of Khara's army and, burning with energy, covered that host and its leader, Dushana, with his shafts, whereupon Dushana, the Slayer of His Foes, met Raghava with weapons that resembled thunderbolts. Then the heroic Rama, enraged, severed Dushana's mighty bow, slew the four steeds yoked to his chariot and cut off the head of his charioteer with a crescent-shaped arrow, thereafter piercing Dushana's breast thrice with his shafts.

Then Dushana lifted up his mace covered with gold, that resembled a mountain peak and was capable of destroying the army of the Gods. Studded with nails, smeared with the flesh of his foes, keen as a diamond, able to cut through the gates of hostile cities, that weapon, resembling a mighty snake, was wielded by that titan of evil deeds, who hurled himself on Rama.

Nevertheless, as Dushana rushed upon him, Rama cut off both his arms with his arrows, and that mace, loosed from his grasp, fell forward on the field like unto the banner of Indra, whilst Dushana, bereft of it, his arms severed, sank to the earth like a mighty elephant that, stripped of its tusks, succumbs.

Seeing Dushana lying on the battlefield, all beings, witnessing that conflict, cried out " Well done ! Well done ! " and paid obeisance to Rama.

Meantime, impelled by fate, the three generals, Mahakapala, Sthulaksha and the mighty Titan Pramathin rushed on Rama ; Mahakapala brandishing a great trident, Sthulaksha bearing a harpoon and Pramathin, a huge axe. Seeing them advancing, Raghava, taking out some sharp steel-pointed arrows, went forward to meet them, as one receives a guest, and the Delight of the House of Raghu severed the head of Mahakapala with a single arrow and assailed Pramathin with innumerable shafts, whereupon he fell to the earth like an axed tree ; thereafter, Rama blinded Sthulaksha with his sharp arrows and, inflamed with wrath, with five thousand shafts slew an equal number of Dushana's followers, sending them to the nether regions.

Hearing that Dushana and his warriors were lying dead, Khara, in great fury, addressed the leaders of the army, saying :—" Let all the titans attack that evil wretch, Rama, and strike him with weapons of every kind."

Speaking thus, Khara, full of wrath, flung himself on Rama, followed by Durjaya, Karaviraksha, Parusha, Kalakarmuka, Hemamalin, Mahamalin, Sarpashya, Syengamin, Prithagriva, Vajnasatru, Vihangama and Rudhinashana, those twelve valiant generals with their forces, who fell upon Rama, discharging their excellent shafts.

And Rama, endowed with supreme energy, with his gold and diamond encrusted arrows, despatched the remainder of Khara's forces, and those shafts, bereft of feathers, like golden stalks, resembling flames wreathed in smoke, laid those demons low, as lightning fells the giant trees. With a hundred ear-shaped arrows, Rama slew a hundred titans ; and a thousand with as many shafts. Their breastplates and ornaments shattered, their bows broken, those Rangers of the Night fell on the earth, bathed in blood. Their hair dishevelled, covered

with gore, they lay on the battlefield, like kusha grass scattered on the altar, and that great forest, strewn with the corpses of demons and befouled with their flesh and blood, resembled the region of hell.

Fourteen thousand demons of cruel deeds were slain by Rama, a mortal, single-handed and on foot ! Out of the whole army only Khara of the great Car and the Titan, Trishiras survived, all others being slain by Lakshmana's elder brother, the illustrious Rama.

Thereafter, seeing that vast army destroyed in the great conflict, Khara, ascending his splendid chariot, advanced on Raghava with his mace upraised.

CHAPTER 27

Rama and Trishiras meet in Combat. Trishiras is slain

As Khara was advancing on Rama, the leader of the army, Trishiras approached him and said :—" O Lord, refrain from engaging Rama in combat and having recourse to me, who am possessed of prowess, witness his defeat. I swear to thee by my sword that I will slay Rama and avenge the death of the entire demon host. In this fight I shall be as Mrityu to him or he to me, but thou, O Excellent One, shouldst restrain thy martial ardour awhile and be a spectator only. Should Rama be slain, thou canst return home triumphant, but should I die, do thou enter the field against him."

Yielding to the persuasions of Trishiras, Khara said to him, who was already doomed :—" Go, engage Rama in combat ! "

Thereupon Trishiras, like a triple crested mountain, advanced on Raghava in a glittering chariot yoked to excellent steeds and, as a great cloud pours down rain, so he discharged a volley of arrows, roaring the while like a kettledrum.

Seeing that demon drawing near, Rama loosed some pointed shafts and a terrible struggle ensued, so that it seemed as if a great lion and a mighty elephant were fighting together.

Trishiras, having pierced Rama's forehead with three darts, that hero, enraged, addressed him in biting accents, saying:—

"O Valiant Titan, the arrows thou hast loosed I bear on my brow as a wreath, do thou now receive the shafts from my bow."

Thereupon Rama let fly fourteen serpentine arrows striking Trishiras on the breast and with four further shafts brought down his four steeds, killing his charioteer with eight other darts and with a single arrow severing the up-raised standard in the front of his car. Then, as that Ranger of the Night was alighting from his shattered chariot, Rama pierced his breast with further arrows, depriving him of his senses, and that one of immeasurable prowess with his swift arrows cut off the three heads of Trishiras, causing the blood to flow from the stricken trunk, and the heads of that Ranger of the Night fell while he yet stood upright after the destruction of his forces.

Then the remaining titans, losing heart, sped away like deer stampeding on the approach of a hunter, and Khara, beholding them fleeing, waxing wrath, rallied them and rushed on Rama as Rahu on the moon.

CHAPTER 28

The Combat between Rama and Khara

SEEING that Dushana and Trishiras had been slain in the fight and witnessing Rama's prowess, Khara was filled with apprehension and reflected :—

"My vast army with my generals Dushana and Trishiras has been destroyed by Rama, single-handed."

Whereupon that Demon Khara, was seized with despondency and hurled himself on Rama, as the Titan Namuchi on Indra. Stretching his mighty bow, Khara discharged at Rama some blood-sucking arrows, resembling venomous snakes, and, mounted on his chariot, began to range over the battlefield, displaying his skill in the use of weapons, covering the four quarters with his shafts.

Beholding this, as Parjanya with his watery floods, Rama, armed with his mighty bow, filled the entire firmament with his irresistible shafts, which resembled tongues of fire, and all space was filled with arrows on every side, which had been loosed by Khara and Rama.

As those two heroes struggled together, the sun was obscured and darkness descended; then, like a mighty elephant struck with a goad, Rama assailed his opponent with Nalikas, Narachas and sharp-pointed Vikarnas, and that demon, standing in his chariot, bow in hand, resembled Death himself carrying his noose. At that moment Khara deemed the destroyer of his forces, endued with heroism, the extremely powerful Rama, to be overcome with fatigue, but Rama remained unmoved under Khara's assaults, as a mighty lion ignores the presence of an insignificant deer.

Then Khara, in his chariot blazing like the sun, drew near to Rama, as a moth approaches a flame and, displaying his skill, severed Rama's bow at the point where he held it, thereafter loosing seven mace-like shafts resembling Indra's thunderbolts, which shattered the armour of his adversary resplendent as the sun itself, so that it fell on the earth. Roaring like a lion, he let loose a thousand arrows, wounding Rama of unparalleled might, and in that conflict Khara set up a mighty shout.

Pierced by Khara's arrows, the body of Rama resembled a clear and smokeless flame, and that Destroyer of his Foes, in order to compass the titan's defeat, took up another great bow, stringing it with a mighty twanging. Holding aloft that prodigious bow, named Vaishnava, bestowed on him by the Rishi Agastya, Rama rushed on Khara, letting fly his arrows furnished with golden feathers and cut down his banner plated with gold, which fell from the chariot, as the sun falls on the earth, cursed by the Gods.

Highly provoked, Khara aimed at the heart of Rama and pierced him with four arrows, so that he resembled a great elephant under the deluge in the rainy season, and Rama, sorely wounded by his shafts, covered with blood, waxed wrath and that foremost of bowmen, with consummate skill, let fly six well-directed arrows. With one, he struck the head

of Khara, with two others, his arms, and with the remaining three crescent-shaped darts, he pierced his breast. Thereafter that illustrious warrior, in his ire, let fly thirteen arrows sharpened on the whetstone, blazing like the sun ; one severed the shafts of his adversary's car, four more felling the steeds ; with a sixth he smote the head of his charioteer, and with three others that great and intrepid warrior, shattered the axles of the chariot ; with the twelfth he severed Khara's bow at the point where he held it, and with the thirteenth arrow, that shone like lightning, Raghava, who was equal to Indra, transfixed Khara, as it were in sport.

His bow shattered, deprived of his chariot, his horses slain, his charioteer fallen, Khara, mace in hand, sprang to the ground and stood waiting.

Seeing Rama's feat of arms that was unsurpassed, the Gods and great Sages rejoiced and, assembling in the sky, with joined palms, extolling the wonderful exploit of that mighty warrior, offered obeisance to him.

CHAPTER 29

Rama and the Demon Khara taunt one another

THEN the illustrious Rama addressed Khara, who was standing mace in hand, bereft of his chariot, and in severe accents, said:—

" O Hero, with the support of this army of elephants, horses, chariots and men, thou hast adopted a course of action condemned by all. He who inflicts pain on others by oppressing them, who is ruthless and engaged in evil deeds, will never know happiness, even though he be Lord of the Three Worlds.

" O Ranger of the Night, one who, like a tyrant, works against the interests of others and resembles a vicious and marauding snake, is ultimately destroyed ! He who, overcome by avarice or envy, pursues an evil course, without reflecting on the consequences, forfeits his life and comes to a miserable end, like a brahmany duck that feeds on hailstones.

"O Titan, how canst thou evade the consequences of the murder of those ascetics dwelling in the Dandaka Forest, enhancing their merit by the practice of virtue?

"Even if they attain to sovereignty, the wicked, engaged in cruel deeds, condemned by all men, do not enjoy it long, but fall like trees whose roots have been severed.

"O Dweller in the Darkness, as in its proper season the tree puts forth its flowers, so in the course of time evil actions produce bitter fruit.

"As a man who swallows poison soon succumbs, so does the sinner swiftly reap the fruits of his evil actions. It is to put down the instigators of evil, the oppressors of others, that I, under the orders of the King, have come hither. To-day my shining arrows shall penetrate thy flesh, as serpents enter an ant-heap, and thou shalt follow in the wake of those virtuous ascetics inhabiting the forest, whom thou hast slain without provocation. Soon those excellent sages, formerly slain by thee, shall in their aerial chariots return to behold thee lying in hell laid low by mine arrows. O Worst of Men, O Thou who art of an odious race, defend thyself as thou wilt, I shall presently cut off thine head like the fruit of a palm tree."

Hearing Rama's words, Khara, his eyes inflamed with anger, beside himself with rage, answered mockingly:—"O Son of Dasaratha, thou art but a common man; yet, having slain these insignificant titans in battle, thou dost extol thyself without reason. Those who are brave and valiant never boast of their prowess; only the scum of the warrior caste praise themselves as thou hast done. Where is the warrior who, on the battlefield, his death imminent, would hymn his own praise? Thou hast revealed thy worthlessness by this self-glorification, as brass wearing the semblance of gold reveals its true value in a fire of kusha grass.

"O Rama, armed with a mace, I stand immoveable on the field, like a mountain enriched by precious metals. Behold me with my mace, like unto Antaka himself, armed with his noose, about to end thy life; I shall destroy not only thee, but the Three Worlds! I could utter more, but refrain, lest our combat be intercepted as the hour of sunset is near. Fourteen thousand titans have fallen under thy blows; by

slaying thee to-day I shall wipe away the tears of their relatives."

Speaking thus, Khara, filled with fury, hurled his marvellous gold-encircled mace at Rama. Leaving the hand of Khara, that massive and effulgent mace, resembling a blazing thunderbolt, consuming the trees and bushes to ashes, drew near to Rama, but he, as it was about to fall like the noose of death, shattered it to fragments with his arrows while yet in the air.

Crushed and broken, it fell to earth like a serpent stricken by the efficacy of herbs and the power of incantations.

CHAPTER 30

The Death of Khara

HAVING intercepted and shattered that great mace with his arrows, the ever virtuous Rama, though still wrath, spoke as if in jest:—

" O Titan, is this the extent of thy power? How strange that one so deficient in prowess should boast so loudly! Severed by my shafts, behold thy mace lies in pieces on the earth! Thou hast bragged to no purpose! Didst thou not declare: 'I will wipe away the tears shed for the death of the titans'? Vain words! As Garuda of old stole the nectar of immortality, I am about to deprive thee of thy life, thou vile and lying wretch! The earth this day will quaff the foaming blood issuing from thy throat, which my shafts have severed. Soon shall thy body, covered with dust, the arms extended, embrace the earth, as a frenzied lover embraces the woman he has won, after long delay.

" O Obloquy of Thy Race, on thy death the Dandaka Forest will become a refuge for those who are themselves a refuge; my shafts will rid the forest of all titans and the ascetics will wander about there without fear. To-day the titan women in sore distress, weeping and terrified, will fly this place. They who inspired terror in others, having evil-doers such as thou as their consorts, shall to-day taste the pangs of sorrow! O cruel, fallen and false-hearted Wretch, in fear of whom the

sages, tremble as they pour forth their oblations into the sacred fire."

As Raghava, swayed by anger, uttered these words, Khara, foaming with rage, began to hurl abuses at him, saying:—

"Verily, despite thy boasting thou art filled with terror and in the face of death dost not know whether to speak or to be silent. Those about to die lose the power of their five senses and no longer know what is right and wrong."

Having spoken thus, that Ranger of the Night, Khara, scowling, looked round him for a weapon and, perceiving a great palm tree near at hand, forcibly uprooted it and whirling it with terrific energy hurled it at Rama, roaring: "Now thou art slain!"

Thereupon, Raghava with his weapon cut that tree to pieces and in an access of rage resolved to slay Khara. His body covered with sweat, his eyes inflamed, he pierced Khara with innumerable darts, so that rivers of blood gushed from his wounds, as do the torrents from the mountain Prasravana.

Stupefied by Rama's arrows and maddened by the smell of blood, Khara rushed at Rama, who, seeing him approach full of fury and covered with gore, retreated a few paces; then, in order to slay him, he selected an arrow that shone like fire, resembling the Rod of Brahma. And that righteous One discharged that shaft at Khara, which had been conferred on the Sage Agastya by Indra, and like a thunderbolt it struck his breast so that he, consumed by the flame issuing therefrom, fell to the ground. As Rudra with his third eye consumed the demon Andhaka in the forest of Sweta, as Vritra was slain by the thunderbolt, as Namuchi by the foam, as Bal by Indra's mace, so did Khara fall.

Then the Gods and the Charanas assembled and, amazed and delighted, struck their drums, showering flowers on Rama and saying:—"In this great conflict Raghava, by means of his pointed shafts, has in an instant slain fourteen thousand demons, able to change their shape at will, with their generals, Khara and Dushana. Great indeed is this exploit of Rama, versed in the science of the Self. What valour! His prowess resembles that of Vishnu himself!"

Saying this, the Gods returned from whence they had come.

Thereafter the Rajarishis and Paramarishis, accompanied by Agastya, joyfully paid homage to Rama and said :—

" It was for this that the Slayer of Paka, the mighty Purandara, visited the hermitage of the Sage Sharabhanga. It was for this that the great Rishis brought thee to this place, O Prince, that thou mightest compass the destruction of the titans of evil deeds. Thou hast fulfilled thy mission amongst us, O Son of Dasaratha ; from to-day the virtuous sages may perform their devotions in the Dandaka Forest in peace."

Then that hero, Lakshmana, accompanied by Sita, issued from the mountain cavern and joyfully entered the hermitage, and the victorious and heroic Rama, honoured by the great Sages, returned to the ashrama, where Lakshmana paid him obeisance.

Seeing her consort returning victorious, having brought felicity to the ascetics, the happy Vaidehi embraced him. Beholding those hosts of demons slain, and that Destroyer of Enemy Hosts worshipped by the magnanimous sages, the daughter of Janaka began to minister to her lord and full of joy, embracing him afresh in her delight, experienced supreme happiness.

CHAPTER 31

Ravana hears of the Death of Khara and determines to slay Rama

THE Titan Akampana, speedily leaving Janasthana, repaired to Lanka in order to seek out Ravana, addressing him thus :—

" O King, the innumerable titans dwelling in Janasthana have perished and Khara himself has fallen on the field of battle ; by some chance, I have been enabled to reach this place alive."

Hearing these words, Ravana, his eyes growing red with anger, bent his gaze on Akampana as if he would consume him, and said :—

" Who, seeking his own destruction, has dared to exterminate my people ? None in the world will be able to protect

him, not even Indra, Kuvera, Yama or Vishnu himself. No man can save him who has defied me! I am the Lord of Time, the Consumer of Fire, the death of Death itself! In my wrath I am able to reduce Aditya and Pavaka to ashes! Verily I can subdue the very wind in its course!"

On this, Akampana, with joined palms, in a voice strangled with terror, solicited the protection of that Ten-necked One, who was mad with anger, whereupon that Lord of the Titans gave him the assurance of safety, inspiring him with confidence, and Akampana thereafter addressed him boldly, saying:—

"There is a son of King Dasaratha, who is youthful, resembling a lion, broad-shouldered like unto a bull, possessing long arms, handsome, renowned and of immeasurable prowess; his name is Rama; it is he, who in Janasthana has slain Khara and Dushana."

At these words, Ravana, King of the Titans, breathing like a great serpent, enquired of Akampana, saying:—"O Akampana, when he came to Janasthana was Rama accompanied by the Leader of the Gods and all the Celestials?"

On hearing Ravana's words, Akampana began to describe the great and noble exploits of Raghava, saying:—

"O King, Rama is a mighty warrior, an invincible archer and the equal of Indra himself in prowess; his eyes are slightly red and his voice resembles a kettledrum, his countenance is like unto the full moon. Followed by Lakshmana, as Anila follows Pavaka, this is the fortunate leader of monarchs who has destroyed thy colony, as fire, fanned by the wind, consumes a forest! Rama was in no wise assisted by the Gods—of this there is no doubt—but his golden-winged arrows flying through the air, transforming themselves into five-headed snakes, destroyed the demons. O Mighty Sovereign, wherever they fled in their terror, they beheld Rama standing before them, and in this wise Janasthana was destroyed by him."

Hearing Akampana's words, Ravana cried out:—"I shall go to Janasthana and slay Rama and Lakshmana!"

Thereupon Akampana answered him, saying:—

"O King, hear from me the true measure of Rama's strength and prowess. Supremely virtuous and brave, none in the world is able to subdue him in his wrath. By means of his

shafts, he is able to stem a river in its course and shatter the very firmament with its stars and planets; nay, if the earth were to be submerged, he could raise it up and, should he so desire it, change the boundaries of the sea and flood the continents with its waters. He is able to subdue all creatures and control the course of the wind itself; indeed that foremost of persons, having destroyed the worlds, can create a new universe. O Ten-necked One, as a sinner is not able to enter heaven, neither canst thou, nor thy titans, defeat Rama in combat. The Gods and titans together cannot overcome him; yet there is a way of destroying him, which I will now unfold to thee.

" Rama is wedded to one more beautiful than any woman on earth, and that slender-waisted damsel is known by the name of Sita. In the full bloom of youth, and possessed of well-proportioned limbs, she is a jewel adorned by jewels. In loveliness, she surpasses the celestial beings, nymphs and nagas. Having lured Rama into the forest, do thou carry her away! Bereft of Sita, Rama will not survive!"

The Lord of the Rakshasas was highly gratified to hear these words and, after a little reflection, said to Akampana:—" Be it so! To-morrow, accompanied by my charioteer alone, I shall, with a glad heart, bring back the Princess of Videha to this spacious palace!"

The following day, Ravana started out in his chariot, yoked to mules, and it was bright as the sun, illumining the four quarters. Following the path of the stars in its rapid course, it resembled the moon itself surrounded by clouds.

Proceeding to a great distance, he approached the hermitage of Taraka's son, Maricha, who entertained him with marvellous dishes unknown to man. Presenting him with a seat and water wherewith to wash his feet, that demon addressed him, saying:—" O Lord of the Titans, is it well with thee and thy people? O Sovereign, being ignorant of thine intention, thine unexpected and sudden advent fills me with apprehension!"

Then the resplendent and eloquent Ravana answered Maricha, saying:—

" O Friend! Rama, who is able to achieve that from which reason recoils, has destroyed the entire colony of Janasthana,

heretofore impregnable, as also my generals, Khara and Dushana. Do thou, therefore, aid me in bearing off his consort, Sita."

Hearing these words of the King of the Titans, Maricha answered :—" O King, the man who has thus counselled thee concerning Sita is assuredly an enemy in the guise of a friend. By such advice, he has unquestionably affronted thee and is envious of thy great might.

" 'Bear Sita away!' who has uttered such words? Who seeks to cut off the head of the entire titan host? Without doubt the man who has thus counselled thee is thine enemy, since he desires thee to extract the poison fangs of a serpent with thy bare hands. Who is it who seeks to lead thee astray and strikes thine head whilst thou art sleeping happily?

" Raghava, that intoxicated elephant, may not be withstood on the field of battle. With the lineage of an illustrious House as his trunk, his valour the ichor, his outstretched arms the tusks, thou art wholly unable to pit thyself against him. Do not rouse that sleeping lion who hunts the titans as deer, the arrows of whose quiver are his talons, his sharp sword the jaws.

" O King of the Titans, do not hurl thyself into that dreadful and bottomless ocean called Rama, whose bow is the crocodile, the strength of whose arm is the quagmire, whose shafts are the rising waves, and whose battlefield is its waters.

" O Lord of Lanka, compose thyself and return in peace to thy capital. O Indra of Titans, continue to enjoy the company of thy consorts, and let Rama delight in his own, in the forest."

Hearing the words of Maricha, the ten-headed Ravana returned to the city of Lanka and re-entered his palace.

CHAPTER 32

Shurpanakha upbraids Ravana and urges him to destroy Rama

When Shurpanakha saw those fourteen thousand titans of dreadful deeds slain by Rama single-handed on the field of battle, together with Khara, Dushana and Trishiras, she once

more emitted dreadful shrieks and roared like thunder. Perceiving the incomparable prowess of Raghava, she became exceedingly agitated and proceeded to Lanka, Ravana's capital.

There she beheld Ravana shining in glory, surrounded by his ministers on the terrace of his palace, like Indra amidst the Maruts. Seated on his golden throne, blazing like a flame, Ravana resembled a great fire kindled on an altar, kept alive by sacrificial offerings. Unconquered by Gods, Gandharvas, Rishis or other creatures, that warrior, who resembled death itself with wide-open jaws, bore on his person the wounds inflicted by the thunderbolts in the war between Gods and titans and on his breast the marks of Airavata's tusks.

Having twenty arms, ten heads, a broad chest, wearing gorgeous attire and bearing the marks of royalty, he was adorned with a chain of emeralds and ornaments of fine gold and with his great arms, white teeth and enormous mouth resembled a mountain.

In the combat with the Gods, Vishnu had struck him a hundred times with his discus, and he bore the marks of other weapons from that great struggle, yet his limbs were intact and had not been severed. He who was able to churn up the seas, a feat not to be performed by any other, whose missiles were the mountain crests, he the scourge of the Gods, who transgressed every moral law, the ravisher of others' wives, the wielder of celestial weapons, the destroyer of sacrifices, who descended into the city of Bhogavati and subdued the serpent Vasuki, from whom, on his defeat, he stole the gentle consort; he who scaled Mount Kailasha and overcame Kuvera depriving him of his aerial chariot Pushpaka, which transported him wheresoever he desired; he who in his anger destroyed the garden of Chaitaratha, the lotus pool and the Nandana Grove and all the pleasurable retreats of the Gods, and with his vast arms, resembling the peaks of mountains, arrested the course of the sun and moon, twin scourgers of their foes, rising in splendour; practising asceticism in the mighty forest for a thousand years he offered his heads in sacrifice to Swyambhu and obtained the boon that neither Deva, Danava, Gandharva, Pisacha, Pataya nor Uraga should be able to slay him, but of man there was no mention;

proud of his strength, he stole the Soma juice, sanctified by mantras, before its pressing by the Twice-born in the sacrifice; this perverse wretch, Ravana of evil deeds, slayer of the brahmins, ruthless, pitiless, delighting in causing harm to others, was verily a source of terror to all beings.

The titan woman beheld her brother full of power, resplendent in gorgeous attire, adorned with celestial garlands, seated on his throne, resembling Time at the destruction of the worlds, that Indra of Demons, the proud descendant of Poulastyā and she, trembling with fear, in order to address him, drew near to the Slayer of his Enemies, who was seated amidst his counsellors. Distracted with terror and passion, Shurpanakha, who was wont to roam everywhere unafraid, now mutilated by the order of that magnanimous Ramachandra, displaying her ravaged features before Ravana, whose large eyes appeared to shoot forth flames, uttered these bitter words to him:

CHAPTER 33

Shurpanakha's Words to Ravana

FILLED with anger, Shurpanakha addressed Ravana, the Oppressor of the Worlds, in harsh accents, saying:—

"O Ravana, wholly devoted to pleasure and indulging in every whim without scruple, thou art oblivious of the great calamity that threatens thee. That monarch who is given up to lust and other dissipations and who is covetous, is disregarded by his subjects, as is the fire in the crematorium. That king who does not fulfil his duties at the proper season brings ruin on his state. The Prince who, committing excess, is ruled by his consorts and readily gives credence to other's counsel, is shunned as the mud of a river is shunned by an elephant. Those rulers who are unable to protect their lands or reclaim the territory wrested from them, live without glory, like mountains submerged in the ocean.

"At enmity with the Gods, the Gandharvas and the Danavas, who are masters of themselves, doing what ought not to be done and inconstant, how art thou able to rule as king?

"O Titan, thou art childish and thoughtless and art not conversant with that which should be known to thee; how canst thou govern? Those monarchs who have neither emissaries, wealth nor policy at their disposal, resemble a common man, O Prince of Conquerors! Since kings are informed by their spies as to what is taking place abroad, they are said to be far-sighted. Meseems thou dost not discharge thy duty and that the counsellors who surround thee are inexperienced, since thou art insensible to the destruction of thy people and their territory.

"Fourteen thousand titans of dreadful deeds with Khara and Dushana have been slain by Rama single-handed; Rama of imperishable exploits has freed the ascetics of fear, established peace in the Dandaka Forest and harassed Janasthana, but thou, who art covetous and a slave to lust, art unaware of the danger that threatens thy dominion. None will help that monarch in time of peril, who is mean, violent, dissolute, haughty and perfidious. Even his own relatives will overpower a king who is excessively vain, pretentious, boastful and irascible. That monarch who fails in his duty and, under the threat of danger is lulled into a false security, will in time of adversity be swept from his kingdom like a straw. Dry wood, turf or dust have some value, but a king who is degenerate is worthless and resembles a faded wreath or a worn-out garment. That monarch who is vigilant however, conversant with what is happening and virtuous, establishes his throne in perpetuity. The king who, even while sleeping, is yet awake to the ordering of his kingdom, who manifests his anger or approval at a fitting time, is revered by all.

"O Thou, whose emissaries have failed to inform thee of the great carnage among the titans, who art bereft of wisdom, O Ravana, thou art lacking in all these great qualities.

"Disregarding others, given up to the pleasures of the senses, not able to reap the advantage of time and place or discriminate between what is good and evil, having sacrificed thy kingdom, thou wilt soon perish."

Reflecting on the infirmities his sister had ascribed to him, Ravana, the Lord of the Titans, opulent, arrogant and powerful, became absorbed in thought.

CHAPTER 34

Shurpanakha urges Ravana to slay Rama and wed Sita

HEARING Shurpanakha's bitter words, Ravana surrounded by his ministers enquired angrily:—"Who is Rama? What, is his strength? How does he look and what is the measure of his prowess? Why has he penetrated into the lonely and inaccessible depths of the Dandaka Forest? With what weapons did he destroy the titans in that conflict, slaying Khara and Dushana as also Trishiras? Tell me truly, O Lovely One, who has disfigured thee?"

Thus addressed by the Lord of the Titans, Shurpanakha in a transport of rage began to relate the history of Rama.

She said: "Rama, the son of King Dasaratha, resembles the God of Love; his arms are long, his eyes large; clad in robes of bark and a black antelope skin, bearing a bow encircled with gold like unto Indra's, he lets fly blazing arrows resembling venomous snakes. Emitting a great shout, he discharges his formidable shafts, and in the struggle I could not distinguish him but beheld the host being decimated under the rain of his arrows, as the harvest is destroyed by the hail sent by Indra. In a short space, single-handed, standing alone, he slew fourteen thousand titans with Khara and Dushana, thus bringing peace to the sages in the Dandaka Forest and delivering them from fear. Chivalrous of soul, Rama, the Knower of Self, would not countenance the slaying of a woman and, having been mutilated at his command, I escaped.

"His brother, endowed with great valour, is renowned for his virtue; his name is Lakshmana and he is devoted to Rama. Full of fire, indomitable, victorious, powerful, intelligent and wise, he is his right hand and his very life's breath. And Rama's virtuous, tender and wedded wife, of large eyes, whose face resembles the full moon, is ever engaged in what is pleasing to her lord. With her lovely locks, well-formed nose, beautiful shoulders and her grace and dignity, one would deem

her to be a forest divinity or Lakshmi herself. With a skin of the colour of molten gold, nails that are rosy and long, that surpassingly lovely woman is Sita, the slender-waisted Princess of Videha. No woman so beautiful has ever appeared in the world, either among the Gods, Gandharvas, Yakshas or Kinneras. He whose wife Sita becomes and whom she will warmly embrace will live in the world more happily than Purandara. With her natural amiability, her marvellous beauty, which is without equal on earth, she would prove a worthy consort for thee, and thou too art fit to be her lord. It was to bring thee this lady of shapely hips, softly rounded breasts and charming features, that I put forth my endeavours, when, O Mighty-armed One, I was mutilated by the ruthless Lakshmana!

"When thou dost behold Vaidehi, whose countenance resembles the full moon, thou shalt instantly be pierced with the darts of the God of Love. If thou desirest to win her, then set off speedily on thy right foot and lay siege to her heart. If, O Ravana, my counsel meets with thine approval, then, O King of the Titans, follow it without delay.

"Knowing the weakness of these people, O Valiant Chief of the Titans, make Sita, who is without blemish, thy consort. Hearing that Rama with his arrows that never missed their mark has slain the titans established in Janasthana, and of the death of Khara and Dushana, thou hast a duty to perform."

CHAPTER 35

Ravana visits the Demon Maricha once more

HEARING the words of Shurpanakha, causing his hair to stand on end, Ravana dismissed his ministers and began to reflect on what should or should not be done. Exploring the true significance of the undertaking and weighing the desirability and undesirability of the matter, he came to the conclusion

'Thus should I act', and, fixed in his resolve, went secretly to the splendid pavilion where his chariots were held in readiness, commanding his driver to bring out his car.

At his order, the zealous charioteer, in an instant, prepared that superb and marvellous chariot, and Ravana ascended the golden car set with gems, that coursed wheresoever he desired, to which mules in golden trappings, bearing the heads of goblins, were harnessed.

Mounted on that chariot, the wheels of which made a sound like thunder, the younger brother of Dhanada, the God of Wealth, proceeded beside the Lord of Rivers and Streams along the seashore.

Seated under a pure-white canopy with his white chanwaras, his ten heads the colour of lapis, wearing ornaments of pure gold, with ten necks and twenty arms, the younger brother of Dhanada, the enemy of the Gods, the slayer of the foremost among the ascetics, possessed of huge heads, like unto the Indra of Mountains with its ten crests, appeared beautiful, standing in his chariot, coursing at will like a mass of cloud, crowned with lightning and accompanied by a flock of cranes.

And that Great One, endowed with prowess, beheld the shores of the sea with its rocks and countless trees, laden with fruit and flowers of every kind, bordered by lakes of limpid water filled with lotuses, and spacious hermitages with their altars and groves of plantain trees lending brilliance to the scene, which was enhanced by blossoming Coconut, Sala, Tala and Tamala trees.

These places had been rendered illustrious by the presence of thousands of great Rishis of rigid penance and Nagas, Suparnas, Gandharvas and Kinneras; they were rendered pleasant by Siddhas and Charanas, who were fully self-subdued and those descendants of Brahma who derived their nutriment from the solar rays and those who lived on a bare subsistence such as the Ajas, Vaikhanasas, Mashas, Valakhilyas and Marichipas.[1] Countless nymphs of celestial beauty, adorned with garlands and jewels, beguiled them with every kind of pastime in which they excelled, and the auspicious consorts of the Gods honoured them by dwelling amongst them, whilst

[1] See under 'ascetics' in Glossary.

Danavas and other Celestial Beings who fed on Amrita frequented that place. Swans, cranes, pelicans and waterfowl disported themselves on the emerald sward, wet and shining with the sea mist; spacious cars festooned with celestial garlands from which strains of sweet music issued, flew here and there at the will of those who had conquered the worlds by their austerities, together with Gandharvas and Apsaras.

Ravana surveyed countless forests of sandalwood, whose roots were full of fragrant sap, delighting the olfactory sense, and groves of excellent Agallocha and Takkola trees with pear trees and bushes of black pepper and heaps of pearls lying on the shore, and coral reefs and gold and silver promontories, tumbling cataracts of crystal water and cities filled with grain and treasure, where the pearls of womanhood could be seen and which were thronged with horses, elephants and chariots.

On the shores of the ocean, the Lord of the Titans beheld a level and charming spot over which cool breezes blew resembling heaven itself, in the centre of which grew a great fig tree, like a bright cloud, where many sages sheltered, and on every side its branches stretched to a distance of several yojanas. It was there that the mighty Garuda brought a huge elephant and a giant tortoise in his claws, wishing to devour them among the branches, but the bough broke under the weight of that enormous bird, and the Vaikhanasas, Mashas, Valakhilyas, Marichipas Ajas and Dhumras being assembled there, Garuda had compassion on them and transported the branch together with the elephant and tortoise in one claw to a distance of one hundred yojanas, where that excellent bird regaled himself on their flesh.

Destroying the empire of the Nishadas with the severed branch, thus delivering the sages, his joy was re-doubled and his energy increased, whereupon filled with strength he resolved to steal the Nectar of Immortality. Having broken the iron bars, he entered the jewelled keep and bore away the Amrita from that place where it had been hidden by the mighty Indra.

It was this same Nyagrodha tree, frequented by groups of great sages, that still bore the marks of Suparna and was called 'Subhadra', that the younger brother of Dhanada now saw before him.

Passing over to the further side of that Lord of the Waters, the Ocean, Ravana saw a solitary hermitage, an ancient and holy retreat in the middle of a forest. There he found the Demon Maricha clad in a black antelope skin, wearing matted locks and given up to the practice of asceticism.

Ravana having approached him, Maricha, according to tradition, entertained him in many ways not known to man. Placing pure food and water before his sovereign, he humbly addressed him saying:—

" Is all well with Lanka, O Chief of the Titans? With what purpose hast thou come hither again so speedily?"

On hearing this enquiry, the mighty and eloquent Ravana answered in this wise:—

CHAPTER 36

Ravana reveals his Project to the Demon Maricha

" O MARICHA, listen to me as I relate everything to thee! O My Child, I am deeply afflicted and thou alone canst temper my distress!

" Thou art conversant with Janasthana, it was there that my brother Khara, the long-armed Dushana, my sister Shurpanakha and the powerful Trishiras and other flesh-eating titans, prowlers of the night, had at my command taken up their residence, in order to harass the sages in that vast forest, who were engaged in their austerities.

" Fourteen thousand titans of terrible deeds, full of courage and supremely skilled, dwelt in Janasthana under the leadership of Khara. These powerful warriors assembled there, met with Rama in the field. Furnished with every kind of weapon, clad in mail, and headed by Khara, they were assailed by the infuriated Rama, without a single provocative word having been uttered, who directed the arrows of his bow against them, and under the fiery darts of a mere mortal, fighting single-handed and on foot, those fourteen thousand titans of great prowess fell; Khara perished in that struggle and Dushana

was laid low with Trishiras also ; peace was thus established in the Dandaka Forest.

" Having been exiled to the forest with his wife by an outraged sire, that insignificant mortal, Rama, the obloquy of the warrior class, a man without moral principle, ruthless, passionate, fanatical, acquisitive and a slave to his senses, dwells in his hermitage, having forsworn his duty. Essentially unjust, seeking to harm others without cause, depending on his own strength alone, he has mutilated my sister by cutting off her ears and nose.

" I have resolved to carry off his consort, Sita, by force, who resembles a daughter of the Gods, and I now solicit thine aid in this undertaking. O Hero, I with my brothers have nothing to fear from the Gods, therefore do thou accompany me as a loyal ally; O Titan; thou hast no equal in pride and courage in battle and in strategy ; thou art also a master, being versed in the laws of magic.

" Learn from me how thou canst best assist me ! Assuming the form of a golden deer, flecked with silver, do thou pass to and fro near Rama's hermitage in the presence of Sita. Seeing that lovely doe, assuredly Sita will say to her lord and Lakshmana :—' Do ye capture it ! '

" When they are far distant and, by good fortune, Sita is left alone, I shall bear her away without hindrance, as Rahu devours the splendour of the moon. The abduction of his consort will cause Rama to die of grief, and I shall regain my happiness and security in a heart wholly satisfied ! "

Hearing these words concerning Sita, the benevolent features of Maricha wilted with terror and, passing his tongue over his dry lips, with a fixed gaze like unto one dead, he regarded Ravana. Filled with dread, knowing well the defence of the forest to be valiantly upheld by Rama, with joined palms Maricha addressed Ravana in words tending to his welfare :—

CHAPTER 37

Maricha seeks to persuade Ravana from his Purpose

HEARING the words of that Sovereign of the Titans, the wise and eloquent Maricha answered him, saying:—

"O King, those who have recourse to flattery are easy to find, but rare are those who are willing to listen to that speech which is severe yet salutory. Assuredly thou dost not know Rama and art not conversant with his great qualities, which equal those of Mahendra and Varuna.

"Thou art thoughtless and thy spies are incompetent; how canst thou dwell in security with thy titans, O Friend? Is not Rama in his wrath able to rid the world of titans? Will not the daughter of Janaka prove to be that which will determine thy death? Will not Sita become the cause of a great catastrophe?

"Will not the city of Lanka perish with thee and thy titans, since it has thee who followest the dictates of thy passions, who art a slave to thy senses and who knowest no restraint, as its lord? An unprincipled monarch, such as thou, is the slave of his desires and in his perversity heeds only evil counsels, thus placing his subjects and his kingdom in jeopardy.

"Rama has neither been disowned by his sire, nor is he unfaithful to his duty, nor is he avaricious nor wicked, nor the obloquy of the warrior caste. The son of Kaushalya is neither void of loyalty nor of other virtues, nor is he given to anger, nor does he seek to harm others. Knowing his father to be deceived by Kaikeyi, yet filled with filial devotion he said 'I will redeem his pledge' and went into exile to the forest. To please Kaikeyi and his father Dasaratha, he renounced his throne and prerogatives in order to enter the Dandaka Forest. Rama is neither passionate nor is he an ignorant man, whose senses are unsubdued; what has been related to thee is false and should never have been uttered. Rama is duty personified; he is virtuous, and this great hero is the Lord of the World, as Indra is the Chief of the Gods. By virtue of her chastity and her devotion, Vaidehi protects Rama as Prabha the Sun, how

canst thou think of bearing her away by force? Do not enter the inextinguishable fire of Rama, who on the battlefield employs his shafts as flames and his bow as fuel. No matter how great thine anger, it behoveth thee not to approach that invincible warrior, bearing his bow, his countenance inflamed with ire, furnished with every weapon, the Destroyer of his Foes!

"Unless thou art willing to forfeit thy kingdom, thine happiness and life itself, that is dear to all, do not approach Rama, who resembles Antaka himself. How canst thou bear away the daughter of Janaka from the forest, who is protected by Rama's bow of immeasurable power? The beloved spouse of that Lion among Men, whose chest is broad, is dearer to him than his own life, and she is wholly devoted to him. The Princess of Mithila of slender waist will never be torn from the arms of that great warrior who resembles a flame in a lit brazier.

"Why enter upon such a vain endeavour, O Great King? Should Rama single thee out on the battlefield, all would be over with thee. Since it concerns thy life, thy fortune and thy kingdom, heretofore invincible, take counsel with thy ministers with Bibishana at their head. In honour reflect and weigh carefully the merits and demerits, gain and loss, of this matter. Compare thy valour with that of Raghava! Consider what is to thine advantage and then do what thou thinkest right. It does not appear fitting to me, that thou shouldst meet the son of the King of Koshala on the battlefield. I counsel thee for thine own good, O King of the Night Rangers!"

CHAPTER 38

Maricha describes his first Encounter with Rama

"O King, formerly I possessed great powers and ranged the earth in a body resembling a mountain, endowed with the strength of a thousand elephants. In colour like a dark cloud, wearing bracelets of fine gold, my brow encircled by a diadem,

armed with a club, I sowed terror in the hearts of all creatures.

"Wandering in the Dandaka Forest, I fed on the flesh of ascetics, and the great and virtuous Sage Vishwamitra, alarmed, went in person to King Dasaratha and addressed that Indra among men, saying:—'Let Rama protect me with vigilance on the day of sacrifice! O Chief of Men, I fear Maricha exceedingly.'

"To these words, the righteous monarch Dasaratha answered that illustrious ascetic, Vishwamitra, saying:—'Raghava is not yet twelve years old and is not skilled in the use of weapons, but I myself will lead an army composed of four angas[1] against those Prowlers of the Night, O Thou Best of Ascetics and will destroy thine adversary in accord with thy desire!'

"Thus addressed by the King, Vishwamitra answered:—

"'Verily thou wert the refuge of the Gods and thine exploits are renowned in the Three Worlds, yet, however powerful thine army, none but Rama on this earth has the power to overcome these demons. Do thou therefore remain here, O Scourge of Thy Foes! Though still a child, Rama is fully able to subdue the demons, I shall therefore take him with me; may all be well with thee!'

"Having spoken thus, the Sage Vishwamitra, highly gratified, took the king's son with him to his hermitage.

"In the forest of Dandaka he initiated the traditional sacrifices, whilst Rama, with his bow strung in readiness, remained close at hand. Yet a child, with his dark skin of bluish hue and his shining glances, clothed in a simple tunic, bearing his bow, his locks tied in a knot, wearing a golden chain, he illumined the Dandaka Forest with his radiance, like unto the new moon about to rise.

"At that instant, full of power and proud of the boons won from Brahma, shining like a cloud and wearing golden earrings, I entered the hermitage. Seeing me, Rama took up his arrow and placed it on the string of his bow with care. In mine ignorance I passed him by, deeming him to be but a child and rushed towards the altar where Vishwamitra stood. Thereupon Rama let loose a sharp arrow fatal to his foes, and striking me, hurled me into the sea, a distance of a hundred

[1] Divisions—see Glossary.

yojanas! O Friend, the valiant Rama, having no wish to kill me, spared my life, but overwhelmed by the violence of the blow I lost consciousness and was thrown into the depths of the sea. After a long while, recovering my senses, I returned to Lanka. Though my life had been spared, yet my companions, who went to mine aid were all slain by the child Rama of imperishable deeds, who proved himself a master in the science of archery.

"If, setting me aside, thou dost pit thyself against him, then thou shalt surely draw down an immediate, dreadful and inescapable retribution, not to be eschewed.

"The titans who know of nought but diversions and entertainments of every kind and who dream only of assemblies and festivities will be plunged in fruitless misery.

"On account of Sita, the City of Lanka, with its temples and palaces, encrusted with every kind of gem, will be razed to the ground under thine eyes.

"Even those who are pious and innocent, suffer for the misdeeds of others through their contact, as fish in a snake-infested lake.

"Their limbs perfumed with divine sandal-paste, wearing celestial ornaments, thou shalt see the titans lying on the earth on account of thy folly. The survivors with their consorts, save those who have been borne away, will flee in all directions, unable to find refuge. Under a hail of arrows, ringed in flames, thou shalt see the edifices of Lanka burnt to ashes.

"O King, there is no greater sin than consorting with another's wife; thou hast thousands of concubines in thy train; therefore, cleaving to thy lawful consorts, preserve thy line, thine honour, fortune, kingdom and thy life. If thou desirest to live happily with thy wives and friends, do not enter into conflict with Rama.

"If, despite my friendly counsels, thou dost bear Sita away by force, then thou and thy kinsmen, together with thine whole army will surely descend to the region of Yama under Rama's deadly shafts."

CHAPTER 39

Maricha again seeks to dissuade Ravana from pursuing his Design

"O RAVANA I have told thee how my life was spared; now hear what happened further.

"I was in no way daunted by this event and, accompanied by two demons, I entered the forest of Dandaka disguised as a deer. There I roamed about living on the flesh of ascetics, visiting the sacred retreats, the sacrificial fires and places of worship, sowing terror amongst the sages, whom I persecuted. Growing exceedingly rapacious, I slew those ascetics, drinking their blood and devouring their flesh, my cruelty rendering me the terror of all the inhabitants of the forest.

"As I roamed here and there throwing obstacles in the way of the religious rites, I encountered Rama living a life of asceticism with the blessed Sita and the mighty Lakshmana, engaged in pious practices and devoted to the welfare of all.

"Filled with contempt for the mighty Rama, who had retired to the forest, and reflecting: 'So he has now become an ascetic,' I, remembering my former defeat, filled with anger, rushed at him with lowered horns, in my folly desiring to kill him. But he, swift as Suparna or Anila, drawing his great bow, loosed three sharp and deadly arrows, and these dread shafts with burnished points resembling lightning, flew off as one, thirsting for blood.

"Knowing Rama's skill and prowess from former times and recognising the peril in which I stood, I ran away and escaped, but the two titans who accompanied me were slain. Having with supreme difficulty evaded Rama's arrows thus preserving my life, I retired to this place, adopting the path of an ascetic and practising Yoga. From that day, I behold Rama, clothed in bark, wearing a black antelope skin, bearing his bow, in every tree, like unto the God of Death himself carrying his noose! In my terror, I see thousands of Ramas, O Ravana! The whole forest assumes the form of Rama and even in

deserted places I behold him! O Chief of the Titans, in sleep also he appear to me and I start up in fear. Such is the terror he inspires in me, that even those words beginning with the syllable 'Ra', such as 'Ratna'[1] and 'Ratha',[2] fill me with alarm.

"Having recognized the prowess of that descendant of Raghu, I am persuaded that thou art not able to withstand him in combat, when even Bali and Namuchi succumbed to him. Whether thou dost enter into conflict with him or makest thy peace, do not speak his name to me, if thou wouldst see me live!

"In this world, there are countless virtuous souls engaged in the practice of Yoga, fulfilling their every duty, who yet perish with those about them through another's fault. I too, therefore, should be doomed to die for another's misdeeds! O Ranger of the Night, do what thou deemest to be right, but follow thee I will not. Truly Rama, who is full of zeal, courage and prowess, will prove to be the destroyer of the titans of this world. Though the wicked-minded Khara of Janasthana was slain by him on account of Shurpanakha, how, in truth, is he to blame for that?

"I have uttered these words for thy good and the good of thy kinsmen; if thou disregardest them, thou and thy people will assuredly perish in combat with Rama!"

CHAPTER 40

Ravana's Wrath

As one about to die refuses a remedy, so did Ravana repudiate Maricha's judicious and opportune words and, having listened to this salutory discourse, replied in harsh and ill-considered accents, saying:—

"Thou Wretch, what thou hast spoken will bear no fruit, as seed that is sown on barren soil comes to nought, nor will it alter my determination to enter into combat with Rama, who is but a witless and insignificant creature.

[1] Ratna—Necklace.
[2] Ratha—Chariot.

" In thy presence I shall bear away the beloved wife of Rama, the slayer of Khara, who has renounced father, mother, kingdom and friends for a woman of no account. O Maricha, my mind is fixed; neither Gods nor titans nor Indra himself can alter my resolve.

" It is proper, when asked, to put forward the advantages and disadvantages of a project and what will best serve or injure a purpose; a wise minister, questioned by his sovereign, seeking his master's good, will answer with due deference, standing before him with joined palms, in words fitting to the occasion, but a gloomy discourse does not please a monarch, who, having regard to his dignity, is thereby affronted.

" Kings of limitless power represent the five Gods: Agni, Indra, Soma, Yama and Varuna, symbolising ardour, valour, gentleness, retribution and forgiveness; therefore at all times they should be honoured and revered. Thou, nevertheless, disregarding thy duty, dost only manifest arrogance. Thou to whom I have come as a guest hast treated me as a miscreant. I have not consulted thee regarding what is expedient or proper, O Titan, I ask thee for thy support in this enterprise. Hear how thou canst assist me.

" Assuming the form of a golden deer studded with silver, proceed to Rama's hermitage and pass to and fro before Vaidehi; after captivating her, thou canst depart. Seeing thee transformed into a deer by thy magic power, Vaidehi struck with wonder, will instantly call on Rama to capture thee. When Kakutstha is far away, having left the hermitage, do thou, imitating his voice, utter such cries as: 'O Sita! O Lakshmana!'

" At this call, urged on by Sita, Saumitri, in fraternal love, being perturbed, will hastily follow in Rama's wake. Kakutstha and Lakshmana being both far distant, I shall bear Sita away, as the thousand-eyed God carried off Sachi. Having accomplished this according to my design, I shall confer half my kingdom on thee, O Titan.

" O Friend, do thou pursue the path which leads to the success of this enterprise and I will follow in my chariot. Obtaining possession of Sita without a struggle by deceiving Rama, I shall return to Lanka with thee, my purpose fulfilled.

" If thou dost not obey me, even against thine inclination, O Maricha, I shall slay thee instantly! I shall compel thee! None can attain happiness and prosperity by opposing his sovereign's will. Verily by coming before Rama thou dost risk thy life, but certain death awaits thee if thou oppose me; therefore reflect carefully on what is most expedient, and do what thou deemest proper."

CHAPTER 41

Maricha counsels Ravana further

THUS commanded by the imperious King of the Titans, Maricha replied in bold and fearless tones, saying:—

" What wretch has counselled thee to take this course, which will lead to thine extinction, together with thy children, thy kingdom and thy counsellors, O Ranger of the Night? O King, who is that evil person, envious of thy good fortune, who seeks to open the portals of death to thee? Assuredly he is thine enemy, who in his impotence plots thy defeat under the blows of a superior antagonist. What miscreant of evil intent seeks to propel thee along the path of self-destruction? The counsellors, who do not dissuade thee from thy fell design, merit death and yet live. Upright ministers ever restrain a king, who following his own desires, enters on an evil path. Thou who should thus be guided art blind.

" By the grace of their sovereign, ministers attain justice, profit, pleasure and renown, but these objects are never found, O Ravana, if a king be lacking in virtue, and his people suffer nought but misfortune.

" O Thou, Foremost of Conquerors, the king is the root of the righteousness and good repute of his subjects, he should therefore always be protected by them. No kingdom survives under a sovereign who is violent, overbearing and intemperate, O Ranger of the Night. Those ministers who counsel violence perish with their chief, as a chariot is precipitated into an abyss by a reckless driver. Many pious persons in this world,

engaged in their duties, have met with destruction with their relatives through the fault of others. A cruel despot is as unable to protect his subjects as a jackal is unable to defend a herd of deer. The titans, whose lord thou art, foolish, ruthless and a slave to thy passions, are doomed.

" It is not I who should be pitied for this unexpected calamity that has overtaken me, but thou, who with thine army will soon meet with destruction. Having been struck down by Rama, he will speedily despatch thee. My mission accomplished, I shall meet my death under the blows of thine adversary. Rest assured that I shall perish as soon as I appear before Rama and know well that the abduction of Sita will cost thee thy life as well as that of thy kinsmen.

" If thou succeedest in bearing Sita away from the hermitage with mine aid, it is the end of thee, of Lanka and of the titans.

" Though seeking thy good and desiring to be of assistance to thee, thou dost disregard my words, as those for whom the last hour has struck do not heed the counsel of their friends."

CHAPTER 42

Maricha assuming the form of a Deer goes to the Hermitage

HAVING addressed these bitter words to Ravana, Maricha, full of apprehension, said :—" Let us go, but know that when I come before that warrior furnished with arrows, sword and bow, which he will wield to my destruction, my life is forfeit! Nay, he who opposes Rama will not return alive! For thee he will prove the Rod of Death and thou shalt fall beneath his blows. In what way can I further thine evil design? Yet I will go. May prosperity attend thee, O Ranger of the Night! "

Highly gratified by these words, Ravana, embracing him warmly, addressed him in honeyed accents, saying :—

" This magnanimity is worthy of thee; now that thou art willing to accede to my request I know thee truly to be Maricha; heretofore another demon addressed me. Do thou with me ascend my winged chariot, encrusted with gems, to which

mules with goblins' heads are harnessed. Having captivated Vaidehi in accord with my desire, fly thence, and she, being left alone, will be forcibly borne away by me."

"Be it so", answered Tataka's son, whereupon Ravana mounted the chariot resembling a celestial car, and leaving that solitary place set out with all speed. Looking down on many villages, forests, mountains, rivers, kingdoms and cities, they finally reached the forest of Dandaka in which Rama's hermitage stood. Descending from the golden car, the Lord of the Titans, accompanied by Maricha, beheld Rama's retreat and taking that demon by the hand, Ravana said to him :—

"Here is Rama's hermitage shaded by palm trees ; now accomplish the purpose for which we have come hither."

Hearing Ravana's words, Maricha in an instant transformed himself into a deer and began to pace to and fro before Rama's hermitage.

Assuming a marvellous form, wonderful to behold, the points of his horns studded with gems, his skin dappled, his mouth like a red lotus, his ears azure-tinted, his neck outstretched, his belly of a sapphire hue, his flanks the colour of the Madhuka flower, shining like the filaments of the Kanja flower, his hoofs like emerald, his legs slender and well-proportioned, his haunches gleaming with all the colours of the rainbow, that demon in an instant had become a ravishing gazelle of iridescent hue, studded with every kind of gem, of exceeding beauty. The whole forest and Rama's enchanting retreat were filled with the radiance of that form, wonderful to behold, that had been assumed by the titan.

In order to capture the glances of Vaidehi with his shimmering colours, he strayed here and there in the grass among the flowers. His skin was stippled with hundreds of silver spots, giving him an enchanting appearance, as he wandered about nibbling the green shoots of the trees.

Approaching the circle of palm trees, he passed slowly here and there between the Karnikara trees in the hermitage, sometimes appearing in full view of Sita. That charming fawn of many colours strayed hither and thither in the vicinity of Rama's ashrama, coming and going at will, sometimes disappearing into the distance, then drawing near again, gambolling

playfully, thereafter crouching on the earth, or following a herd of deer; then again it would appear at their head, and by every means this titan, in the form of a gazelle describing a thousand frolicsome circles, sought to attract the attention of Sita. The other fawns, approaching, snuffed its scent and then scattered in all directions, but that demon, who formerly had taken delight in slaying them, now, in order not to betray his real nature, abstained from molesting those who approached him.

Meantime Vaidehi of brilliant glances was engaged in gathering flowers, diverting herself in the midst of the Karnikara, Ashoka and Cuta trees that she loved so well. As she wandered here and there plucking the blossoms, that princess of tender looks, who did not merit exile in the forest, saw before her the fawn studded with precious gems, its limbs encrusted with diamonds and pearls. Beholding that doe, with its beautiful teeth and lips, its skin the colour of silver, the slender-waisted Sita opened her eyes wide in wonder and delight, and the marvellous fawn, seeing Rama's beloved consort, continued to pace to and fro before her, illumining the forest. Looking at that deer, never before seen by man, Sita, the daughter of Janaka, was amazed.

CHAPTER 43

Sita is enamoured of the Fawn

THEN the lovely Sita, of flawless limbs and skin of a pure golden hue, gathering flowers, beheld that ravishing fawn with gold and silver flanks, and highly delighted called to her Lord and Lakshmana, who were furnished with weapons, saying:—

"O Prince, do thou come quickly with thy younger brother!" Thus she cried again and again, while continuing to watch the deer, and at her call those two lions among men, Rama and Lakshmana turned their eyes in that direction and beheld the fawn.

Astounded, Lakshmana exclaimed :—" Undoubtedly the titan Maricha has assumed the form of a deer. Kings who hunt in the forest, lured by this deceptive shape, are slain by him and, O Rama, this brilliant fawn, whose radiance rivals the sun, is the device of a magician ; such a deer does not exist on earth, O Master of the World, it is an illusion, born of cunning."

As Lakshmana was speaking thus, Sita with a delighted smile interrupted him and being wholly captivated by this phantom, said :—

" O Son of a King, this marvellous fawn has taken possession of my heart ; take it captive, O Great Warrior, it will serve as a plaything. Many beautiful creatures, lovely to look upon, range the forest in the vicinity of our hermitage, such as Chamaras, Srimaras and Rikshas, while troops of Prishatas, Vanaras and Kinneras disport themselves here, but O Long-armed Heroes full of grace and strength, I have never seen a wild creature whose brilliance and gentle nimble ways are equal to this wonderful fawn's. With its slender many-coloured body encrusted with gems, it illumines the whole forest around me with a lustre resembling the moon's. What beauty ! What resplendence ! What grace ! What radiance ! This marvellous fawn with its graceful limbs possesses me utterly. If thou art able to capture it alive, it will prove an object of supreme wonder in the hermitage and when our exile is over it will be an ornament to the palace of the queens.

" O Lord ! Prince Bharata and my mothers, seeing this celestially beautiful deer, will be struck with amazement. If thou art not able to capture this wonderful fawn alive, its skin will be most precious, O Lion among Men. I shall delight to sit on its golden hide, strewn with kusha grass. I crave pardon if this cruel wish may seem unworthy of a woman, but the beauty of the deer excites my admiration ! "

This graceful creature with its golden skin, its horns set with precious gems, shining like the rising sun or the Milky Way, captivated Rama himself, who, hearing Sita's words, yielded to her wish and gaily addressed Lakshmana, saying :—

" O Lakshmana, mark how this deer has excited Vaidehi's desire. On account of its supreme beauty this fawn will lose

its life to-day. Neither in the forest, nor in the region of Nandana, nor in the solitude of Chaitaratha, nor anywhere on earth does such a fawn exist.

" See how, whichever way its velvety striped skin is brushed, it glistens. When it opens its mouth, its tongue shoots forth like a bright flame in a lit brazier or lightning from a cloud. With its head of emerald and crystal, its belly shining like mother of pearl, whose heart would it not steal away with its indescribable beauty ? Who, on beholding this divine apparition, shining like gold, covered with every kind of gem, would not be charmed ?

" It is for food and sport that kings, bearing their bows, hunt wild beasts in the forest, and many treasures of different kinds are found there by chance, such as pearls, diamonds and gold, increasing man's possessions, surpassing the imagination of Indra, and, O Lakshmana, this is the wealth spoken of by those who are versed in the Artha-Shastra.

" The slender-waisted Vaidehi will sit with me on the fleece of that marvellous deer ; neither the skin of Kadali, Priyaka, Prabeni or Abiki compares in texture to that of this deer. Truly exquisite, this gazelle and its counterpart[1] in the heavens are both divine, the one amongst the stars and the other on earth, yet if thou art certain that this is an illusion created by the titan, O Lakshmana, I will destroy it. That cruel and evil-souled Maricha slew many great ascetics ranging in the forest ; innumerable kings, armed with bows, hunting here, have fallen under his assaults when he assumed the shape of an illusive deer ; let us therefore end his life.

" Formerly Vatapi oppressed the Sages here also, and, entering their stomachs, emerged, riving them, as the embryo of a mule may cause the death of its mother. One day that demon encountered the great Sage Agastya, gifted with divine powers and was devoured by him when presented in the form of an offering by his brother Ilwali ; when the repast was concluded that titan called out ' Vatapi come forth ' but the excellent Rishi, addressing Ilwali with a smile, said :—

" ' Since being blinded by thy power, many illustrious sages

[1] This refers to the fifth lunar constellation Mrigashira, said to resemble a deer.

have fallen victim to thee on this earth; thy brother is now wholly consumed by me.'

"O Lakshmana, this titan will also be annihilated like Vatapi for having set me at nought, who am fixed in my duty and master of my senses. He shall meet his end, as did Vatapi who defied Agastya. Do thou remain here without absenting thyself and guard Sita with care. It is our first duty, O Delight of the House of Raghu! I shall either slay that deer or bring it back alive; till I return with the deer, which I shall do without delay, do thou remain here with Sita, O Son of Sumitra. She shall have the fawn; its skin will cost it its life this day. Now keep watch over Sita in the hermitage. Till with a single arrow I have brought down this dappled fawn and slain it, do thou stay here, O Lakshmana, with the mighty raven, Jatayu, who is strong and wise and ever engaged in pious acts, and protect Maithili in every way."

CHAPTER 44

Rama slays Maricha

HAVING issued this command to his brother, that invincible warrior, the Delight of the House of Raghu, endowed with great prowess, girded on his sword in its golden scabbard, and taking up his triply-curved bow, his personal insignia and two quivers filled with arrows, he set forth with long strides. Beholding that Indra among Men, the king of the beasts in fear disappeared only to re-appear once more.

Girt with his sword and bearing his bow in his hand, Rama ran in the direction of the deer and beheld it in all its beauty, close to him. Bow in hand, fixing his eyes on the fawn as it fled into the forest, he saw it sometimes taking a single bound, and then, in order to lure him on, allowing him to draw closer. Timid and fearful, it would leap into the air, at times becoming visible and then disappearing in the depths of the thickets.

As in the autumn, stray clouds pass across the moon's face, so that she sometimes shines in all her brilliance and at others

seems far away, so appearing and disappearing, Maricha, in the form of a deer, enticed Rama far from the hermitage.

Kakutstha found himself, despite his exertions, thus beguiled and the fawn, feigning fatigue, would crouch in the grass or, the better to deceive him, join a herd of deer, but when Rama approached, it would take to flight once more, concealing itself, only to re-appear in the distance. Sometimes, in fear, it would make itself invisible, then, with Rama in desperate pursuit, it would appear in a far off thicket. Thereupon increasingly wrath, Rama drew out a death-dealing glittering arrow more brilliant than the sun's rays and placing it firmly on his bow, stretching it with great energy, let fly that shaft that resembled a fiery serpent.

Loosing that flaming arrow, which resembled a lightning flash, fashioned by Brahma himself, that marvellous shaft, pierced the heart of Maricha, who had assumed the form of a deer. Thereat, bounding into the air as high as a palm tree, the titan fell mortally wounded and lay on the earth, having but a few moments to live. On the point of death, emitting a terrible cry, Maricha abandoned his assumed form.

Recollecting the words of Ravana and reflecting on how to induce Sita to send away Lakshmana, so that in her isolation she might be borne away, Maricha, deeming the moment to be at hand, imitating Rama's voice, cried out " O Sita, O Lakshmana ! "

Stricken to the heart by that extraordinary arrow, discarding his deer's form, Maricha took on the huge shape of a titan. Then Rama, beholding that titan of formidable size, writhing on the earth about to die, his limbs covered with blood, remembered the words of Lakshmana and reflected :—" The illusion created by Maricha, spoken of by Lakshmana is manifest, it is Maricha whom I have slain. What will Sita not do on hearing the cry of the stricken titan : ' O Sita, O Lakshmana ' ? To what a pass will the mighty Lakshmana now have come ? "

Thus did the virtuous Rama reflect, his hair standing on end and, having slain the titan in the form of a deer and heard his cry, a great dread seized him.

That dappled fawn being slain, Rama speedily killed and seized the carcase of another deer and hastened towards the hermitage.

CHAPTER 45

Sita sends Lakshmana to Rama's Assistance

HEARING that cry of distress, which seems to come from her lord, Sita said to Lakshmana :—

" Dost thou not recognise the voice of Raghava ? Go quickly and see what has befallen him. Hearing his cry, my heart is filled with anxiety ; he must be in great peril to call out thus ; go to the assistance of thy brother, he is in need of thee. He has been overpowered by the titans like a bull by lions."

Recollecting Rama's command, Lakshmana withstood Sita's appeal and did not move, whereupon Janaki, highly provoked, said to him :—

" O Son of Sumitra, under the guise of affection thou dost show emnity towards thy brother, since thou dost not instantly proceed to his aid ! Because of me, Rama is about to die ! In thy desire to possess me, thou dost refuse to follow Raghava; thou dost welcome his death and hast no affection for him. It is for this reason that thou dost remain indifferent to his plight ; if he is in peril, of what use is my life ? It is on his account that I came hither."

Thus, weeping and overcome with grief, did Vaidehi speak, and Lakshmana answering her, who was trembling like a frightened doe, said :—

" O Vaidehi, neither serpents, titans, celestial beings, Gods, giants nor demons can overcome thy lord. Assuredly, O Princess, among Gods and Kinneras, wild beasts and goblins, there are none who can stand against Rama in battle. O Beautiful One, he who is equal to Indra is invincible. Do not speak thus ! I dare not leave thee alone in the forest without Rama.

" Even the Three Worlds and the Gods, with Indra Himself at their head, meeting Rama in combat, would be overcome by him, therefore calm thyself and banish all fear. Thy lord will soon return, having killed the marvellous deer ; that voice

is assuredly not his, nor that of a God; it is an illusion, like the city of the Gandharvas and has been produced by the titan.

" O Vaidehi, thou hast been left in my charge by the magnanimous Rama. O Fair One, I dare not leave thee here alone. We are an object of hatred to the titans since the slaying of Khara and the destruction of Janasthana. The titans are able to simulate the voices of others in the great forest and delight in doing so in order to trouble the virtuous. O Vaidehi, have no anxiety!"

At these words, Sita, her eyes flashing with anger, answered:—

" O Thou Evil-hearted Wretch, Obloquy of thy Race, who delightest in Rama's misfortune! Is it a source of wonder that a villain such as thou, perverse, whose motives are concealed, should speak thus in the hour of Rama's distress? By an excess of perfidy, thou hast accompanied Rama to the forest and, practising guile, lusteth after me, while assuming the form of a friend! Or hast thou been engaged by Bharata as his agent? Thy design as also Bharata's, shall not succeed, O Saumitri! How should I desire another after serving the lotus-eyed Rama as my lord? Rather would I yield up my life in thy presence, O Saumitri; without Rama, I cannot maintain life on this earth for an instant."

Hearing these cruel words, causing him to shudder, Lakshmana, the master of his senses, with joined palms answered her, saying:—

" It is not for me to gainsay thee; thou art as a goddess to me. An ill-considered utterance from a woman causes no surprise. Negligent in her duty, fickle and peevish, woman is the cause of dissension between father and son; truly I am unable to endure these words of thine that pierce my ears like flaming darts, O Daughter of Janaka! O Vaidehi, may all the inhabitants of the forest bear witness that to my respectful address thou hast responded with such bitterness! It will go hard with thee this day for having set me at nought, I, who am obedient to the behests of mine elder brother! May all the Deities protect thee, O Lady of Large Eyes! Sinister portents present themselves to me! May I find thee safe when I return!"

At these words, the daughter of Janaka began to weep and scalding tears bathed her countenance as she answered :—

"If I am separated from Rama, I shall cast myself into the river Godaveri! O Lakshmana, I shall hang myself or enter into the fire, but I shall never approach any man other than Raghava!"

Thus protesting before Lakshmana, Sita, distraught, beat her breast with her hands and lamented.

In the face of her despair, Lakshmana, distressed, sought to comfort her, but she refused to answer the brother of her lord, whereupon he, bending low before her, set out to rejoin Rama, looking back again and again.

CHAPTER 46

Ravana approaches Sita

STUNG by Sita's bitter words, Lakshmana, in his ardent desire to rejoin his elder brother Rama, set out without further delay.

Thereupon Ravana, in the guise of a mendicant, availing himself of the opportunity, rapidly approached the hermitage with the purpose of seeking out Vaidehi. With matted locks, clad in a saffron robe and carrying a triple staff and loshta, that highly powerful one, knowing Sita to be alone, accosted her in the wood, in the form of an ascetic, at dusk when darkness shrouds the earth in the absence of the sun and moon. Gazing on Sita, the consort of Rama, Ravana resembled Rahu regarding Rohini in the absence of Shasi.

Beholding that monstrous apparition, the leaves of the trees ceased to move, the wind grew still, the turbulent course of the river Godaveri subsided and began to flow quietly. The ten-headed Ravana, however, profiting by Rama's absence, drew near to Sita in the guise of a monk of venerable appearance while she was overcome with grief on account of her lord.

Approaching Vaidehi in an honourable guise, as Saturn draws near to the Chitra star, Ravana resembled a deep well

overgrown with grass. He stood there gazing on the glorious consort of Rama of incomparable beauty, Sita, with her brilliant lips and teeth, her countenance as radiant as the full moon, seated on a carpet of leaves, overwhelmed with grief, weeping bitterly.

On seeing the Princess of Videha alone, clad in a yellow silken sari, whose eyes resembled lotus petals, the titan, struck by Kama's arrow, joyfully accosted her, feigning the gentle accents of a brahmin. Praising her beauty, unequalled in the Three Worlds, which caused her to resemble Shri, he said :—

" O Thou, possessed of the brilliance of gold and silver, who art clad in a yellow silken sari and who, like a pool of lilies, art wreathed in garlands of fresh flowers, art thou Lakshmi bereft of her lotus or Kirti or a nymph of graceful aspect? Art thou Bhuti of slender hips, or Rati disporting herself in the forest?

" How even, sharp and white are thy teeth, how large thy slightly reddened eyes with their dark pupils, how well proportioned and rounded are thy thighs and how charming thy legs, resembling the tapering trunk of an elephant! How round and plump are thy cheeks, like unto the polished fruit of the Tala trees; how enchanting is thy bosom, decorated with pearls!

" O Lady of Sweet Smiles, lovely teeth and expressive eyes, as a river sweeps away its banks with its swift current so dost thou steal away my heart, O Graceful One. Slender is thy waist, glossy thine hair, thy breasts touching each other enhance thy loveliness; neither the consorts of the Gods, the Gandharvas, the Yakshas nor the Kinneras can compare with thee. 'Till this hour, I have never seen any on earth so perfect; thy youth, thy beauty and thy grace are unequalled in the Three Worlds!

" Seeing thee dwelling here in solitude distresses my heart. Come with me! It is not fitting that thou shouldst remain here; this place is frequented by ruthless demons, who are able to assume different forms at will. It is for thee to reside in sumptuous and delightful palaces in the vicinity of pleasant cities, surrounded by groves of sweet smelling shrubs and

green trees, where thou canst wander clad in beautiful robes, decked in fragrant garlands, with a consort worthy of thy beauty, O Charming One. O Dark-eyed Lady of Sweet Smiles, art thou wedded to one of the Rudras, the Maruts or Vasus? Thou appearest divine to me, yet these are not the haunts of the Gandharvas, Devas or Kinneras, but of the Titans. How hast thou come here?

" Dost thou not fear to live amidst monkeys, lions, tigers, deer, wolves, bears, hyenas and leopards? O Fair One, dost thou not tremble before those terrible elephants, maddened with the exudation of temporal juices, in this great forest? Who art thou? To whom dost thou belong? For what reason dost thou range the Dandaka Forest alone, which is frequented by terrible titans?"

With these flattering words did the evil-minded Ravana address Sita, and seeing him in the guise of a brahmin, she entertained him with the traditional hospitality due to an uninvited guest. Leading him to a seat, she brought water to wash his feet and offered him food, saying:—" Be pleased to accept this repast!" Seeing him in the form of a Twice-born with his loshta and saffron robe, unrecognizable in his disguise, Sita welcomed him as a true brahmin, saying:—

" Be seated, O Brahmin, and accept this water for washing thy feet, also this meal, composed of ripe fruits and roasted grain, prepared for thee, which please enjoy."

Thus did she receive him with hospitable words, but Ravana, his gaze fixed on the Princess of Mithila, determined to bear her away, thus preparing his own destruction.

Sita, anxiously expecting the return from hunting of her illustrious lord, with Prince Lakshmana, searched the vast and darkening forest with her eyes but was unable to see either Rama or his brother there.

CHAPTER 47

The Conversation of Ravana and Sita

THUS addressed by Ravana in the guise of a mendicant, who had resolved to bear her away, Sita reflected :—

'This person is my guest and a brahmin ; if I do not answer him he may curse me ! ' and thinking thus, she said:—

" May good betide thee ! I am the daughter of the high-souled Janaka, the King of Mithila, my name is Sita and I am the beloved consort of Rama. For twelve years, I dwelt in the palace of Ikshwaku, where all my desires were gratified and I enjoyed every comfort.

" In the thirteenth year, the king with the approval of his ministers decided to enthrone Rama. All being ready for the installation of Raghava, Kaikeyi, one of my mothers-in-law, requested a boon of her lord. Having gratified my father-in-law by her services, she extracted two promises from him, the exile of my husband and the installation of her son Bharata, saying :—' I shall neither eat drink nor sleep if Rama is enthroned and it will prove the end of my life.'

" The Lord of the Earth, my father-in-law, hearing her speak thus, offered her diverse gifts, but Kaikeyi refused them. At that time, my lord was twenty-five years old and I eighteen. Being loyal, virtuous, honourable and devoted to the good of all, my lord, Rama, endowed with long arms and large eyes, was renowned throughout the world. Our father King Dasaratha, blinded by passion, in order to please Kaikeyi, did not install Rama, and when he came before his sire, in order to receive the crown, Kaikeyi addressed the following bitter words to him :—" O Ramachandra, hear from me the decree issued by thy father. This great kingdom is to be given to Bharata and thou art to dwell in the forest for fourteen years. Now go hence, and save thy sire from the sin of perjury."

" Then the imperturbable Rama replied : ' So be it ' and acted accordingly. My lord of firm vows, accustomed to give

and not to receive commands, who ever speaketh truth without prevarication, hearing these words acquiesced and has fulfilled his vow to the uttermost. His brother, the valiant Lakshmana, a Lion among Men and the companion of Rama in combat, the Destroyer of his Foes, given to asceticism, bearing his bow, followed Rama into exile with me.

" Thus Raghava, fixed in his vow, wearing matted locks, accompanied by myself and his younger brother, penetrated into the depths of the forest of Dandaka. We have all three been banished from the kingdom by Kaikeyi and, depending on our own strength, wander about in the forest. Remain here awhile, O Foremost of the Twice-born, my lord will soon return with an abundance of roots and fruit and sufficient venison, having slain deer, kine and boar. But thou, O Brahmin, tell me who thou art and what thy name, family and lineage. Why dost thou range the Dandaka Forest alone? "

Hearing the words of Sita, the consort of Rama, the mighty titan replied in these harsh words :—

" O Sita, I am that Ravana, King of the Titans, in fear of whom the world, the Gods, titans and men tremble. O Source of Delight, since I beheld thee shining like gold, clad in silk, my consorts have ceased to find favour with me. Do thou become the chief queen of those countless women, stolen away from many quarters by me.

" Lanka, my capital, set in the midst of the sea, is built on the summit of a hill. There, O Sita, wander with me in the groves and thus forget the forest. O Lovely One, if thou dost become my wife, five thousand servants adorned with diverse ornaments shall attend on thee."

The blameless daughter of Janaka, being thus addressed by Ravana, was filled with indignation and answered that titan with contempt, saying :—

" I am dependent on my lord, Rama, who is as steadfast as a rock, calm as the ocean and equal to Mahendra himself, Rama, endowed with every good quality, who resembles the Nyagrodha tree in stature. I am dependent on that illustrious and noble warrior, whose arms are long, whose chest is broad, whose gait is like a lion's, nay, who resembles that king of beasts ; to him, the greatest of men, I give my whole allegiance.

To Rama, whose countenance resembles the full moon, the son of a king, master of his passions, of immeasurable renown and power, I shall ever remain faithful.

"O Jackal, thou desirest a she-lion but art no more able to possess me than grasp the light of the sun! Thou Wretch, who seekest to carry off the beloved spouse of Raghava! Verily thou dost imagine the trees that thou seest before thee to be made of gold,[1] that thou art seeking to draw the teeth of a famished and courageous lion, that enemy of the deer, or extract the fangs of a poisonous snake. Dost thou desire to lift up the Mandara mountain with thy bare hands or live at ease after drinking poison? Thou dost seek to rub thine eyes with a needle and lick a razor with thy tongue! Thou desirest to cross the ocean with a stone round thy neck or grasp the sun and moon. O Thou who seekest to bear away the beloved wife of Rama, thou art endeavouring to carry a blazing fire in thy robe or walk on iron spikes.

"The disparity between thee and Rama is as that between a jackal and a lion, a brook and an ocean, the nectar of the Gods and sour barley gruel; between gold and iron, sandal and mud, an elephant and a cat, an eagle and a crow, a peacock and a duck, a swan and a vulture. Even shouldst thou steal me, if that mighty archer, Rama, whose prowess is equal to the Lord of a Thousand Eyes, still lives, thou wilt no more be able to devour me than a fly can eat the clarified butter into which it has fallen."

Addressing that cruel Ranger of the Night thus, the guileless Sita shook like a leaf in the wind.

Perceiving her distress, Ravana, terrible as death, began to boast of his race, his power, his name and his exploits, in order to increase her fear.

[1] The trees of hell, said to be made of gold.

CHAPTER 48

Sita defies Ravana

PROVOKED by Sita's proud words, Ravana, scowling, answered her in fierce accents :—

" O Lady of Fair Complexion, may prosperity attend thee! I am the brother of the Lord of Wealth, my name is Ravana. I am the mighty Dashagriva from whom, as all creatures before death, the Gods, Gandharvas, Pisachas, Patagas and Nagas flee in terror. I have subdued my blood-brother Kuvera, who for a certain reason I incited to combat and who, vanquished by me, fled in alarm from his sumptuous abode and sought refuge on Kailasha, the Lord of Mountains.

" By virtue of my prowess I robbed him of his marvellous chariot, Pushpaka, that moves according to one's will, and in it I range the skies. Seeing my dread visage, the Gods with Indra at their head flee in terror, O Maithili. Wheresoever I roam, the wind blows temperately and the rays of the sun resemble the moon's. Where I stay, the leaves of the trees become motionless and the rivers cease to flow.

" Beyond the sea stands my magnificent capital, Lanka, inhabited by powerful titans, equal to Indra's citadel, Amaravati.

" That beautiful stronghold, encircled by dazzling battlements with golden ramparts and gates of emerald, is a city of dreams.

" Filled with elephants, horses and chariots, echoing to the sound of bugles, it is embellished by pleasant gardens planted with diverse trees, yielding fruit of every desirable taste. O Sita, O Thou Daughter of a King, in that city thou shalt dwell with me, forgetting the lot of mortal women. There thou shalt taste celestial delights! O Lady of exquisite countenance, think of Rama no more, who is but human and whose end is near. Placing his beloved son on the throne, King Dasaratha sent his heir of negligible prowess to the forest. What wouldst thou with that Rama, deprived of his kingdom, living

as an ascetic in solitude, O Large-eyed Beauty? I, the Lord of all the titans, have come to thee in person, pierced by the shafts of the God of Love. It does not befit thee to disregard me. O Timid Lady, if thou dost pass me by, thou wilt repent, like Urvashi, who thrust away Puraravas with her foot. Rama is but a mortal and not equal to even a finger of mine in combat. By good fortune I have come to thee; do thou therefore yield thyself to me, O Fair One."

At these words, Vaidehi, her eyes flashing with anger, though alone, answered that Lord of the Titans boldly, saying:—

"Since thou claimest to be the brother of the God, Kuvera, who is held in veneration by all the Celestials, how dost thou dare to commit this infamous deed, O Ravana? Undoubtedly all the titans will meet with destruction, having so cruel, senseless and lustful a person as thee as their sovereign. The ravisher of Indra's consort, Sachi, may survive, but he who bears away the wife of Rama will never live in peace. O Titan, it were possible for the one who deprives the Bearer of the Thunderbolt of his consort of unsurpassed beauty to live on earth, but he who insults me will never escape death, were he to drink the water of immortality!"

CHAPTER 49

Sita's Abduction by Ravana

HEARING those words of Sita, the mighty Ravana, striking one hand on the other, revealed his gigantic form and, skilled in speech, addressed her, saying:—

"Methinks thou hast taken leave of thy senses, hast thou not heard of my great prowess and valour? Standing in space, I am able to lift up the earth; I can drink the waters of the ocean and destroy death himself in combat. With my shafts I can pierce the sun and cleave the terrestial globe. Thou, who dost allow thyself to be deceived by any trick and dost follow any whim, behold how I can change my shape at will."

Speaking thus, Ravana, full of wrath, his eyes glowing like

burning coals, resembled a flame, and discarding his benign aspect, he, the younger brother of Kuvera, assumed a terrible shape, resembling death itself.

With smouldering eyes, a prey to anger, resplendent in ornaments of fine gold, like a dark cloud, that Ranger of the Night appeared before her with his ten heads and twenty arms. Abandoning his ascetic disguise, the King of the Titans took on his native form; wearing a blood-red robe, he fixed that pearl among women, Maithili, with his gaze, thereafter addressing her, who resembled the sun, whose hair was dark and who was clothed in a robe and jewels, saying :—

" O Fair Lady, if thou desirest a master famed throughout the Three Worlds, then surrender thyself to me. I am a husband worthy of thee; do thou serve me forever! I shall do thee great honour nor will I ever displease thee. Renouncing thine attachment to a man, place thine affection on me. What binds thee to Rama, O Thou Foolish One who deemest thyself wise; he who has been banished from his domain, who has failed to fulfil his destiny and whose days are numbered, Rama, who on the injunction of a woman abandoned kingdom, friends and people to inhabit a forest frequented by wild beasts?"

Speaking thus to Maithili, who was worthy of tenderness and gentle of speech, that wicked titan, inflamed by passion, seized hold of her as Budha seizes Rohini. With his left hand he grasped the hair of the lotus-eyed Sita, and with his right, her thighs. Seeing Ravana with his sharp teeth like the peak of a mountain, resembling death itself, the Celestial Beings fled away in terror. Then instantly the great chariot belonging to Ravana, made of gold, to which braying mules were harnessed, appeared and, addressing Sita in harsh tones, he lifted her up and, clasping her, ascended the car.

Then the virtuous and unfortunate Sita, being overpowered by the titan, began to cry aloud, "Rama! Rama!" but he was far away in the depths of the forest. Though she possessed no love for him, Ravana, burning with passion, rose high into the air with her, as she struggled like the consort of the Indra of Serpents.

Seeing herself borne through the air by the King of the

Titans, Sita with piercing shrieks, distracted with anguish, cried out: "O Lakshmana, thou long-armed warrior, ever ministering to the satisfaction of thy superiors, dost thou not know that I am being carried away by a titan able to assume any shape at will? O Raghava thou, who art willing to renounce life and happiness in the cause of duty, dost thou not see that I have been borne away by one of unsurpassed wickedness? O Thou, the Scourge of Thine Enemies, art thou not accustomed to punish evildoers? Why dost thou not subdue the arrogance of this wicked titan? It is true that an evil deed does not bear fruit immediately, but time causes the grain to ripen.

"For this outrage, bereft of thy senses by fate, thou shalt, O Ravana, meet with a terrible retribution, bringing about thine end. Alas! The designs of Kaikeyi are crowned with success, since I, the virtuous consort of Rama am separated from that hero. I invoke Janasthana and the flowering Karnikara trees, so that they may tell Rama speedily that Sita has been borne away by Ravana! I appeal to the Godaveri river, that re-echoes to the cry of cranes and swans, to inform Rama that Ravana has stolen Sita away! Offering salutations to the forest Deities, I call upon them to tell my lord of mine abduction! I beseech all creatures, whatever they may be, whether beast or bird or those that inhabit the forest, to make these tidings known to Rama and to tell him that his tender spouse, dearer to him than life, has been forcibly borne away by Ravana. Were death himself my ravisher, that mighty-armed one, hearing this report, would rescue me by his prowess!"

In the extremity of her grief, the large-eyed Sita, uttering this lament, observed the vulture Jatayu, perching on a tree. Thereupon beholding him, the beautiful Sita, borne away by Ravana, who was filled with carnal desire, cried out in piteous tones:—

"O Noble Jatayu, see how I am being ruthlessly carried off by the wicked King of the Titans, like a woman bereft of her protector. Thou wilt not be able to resist him, for this cruel and evil Ranger of the Night is powerful, arrogant and furnished with weapons. Nevertheless, O Bird, do thou bear the tidings of mine abduction to Rama and Lakshmana and tell them all, omitting nothing."

CHAPTER 50

Jatayu attacks Ravana

JATAYU, who was fast asleep, awoke on hearing these words and beheld Ravana and the daughter of Videha.

Thereupon, the King of Birds, with his sharp beak resembling the peak of a mountain, perching on the tree, spoke softly to Ravana, saying :—

" O Dashagriva, I am conversant with the Puranas, firm in my vows, and follow the path of dharma. O Brother, it does not become thee to commit this infamy in my presence! My name is Jatayu, the King of the Vultures ; she whom thou dost seek to bear away is the beautiful Sita, the faithful and illustrious consort of the Protector of the Worlds, that Lord of Men, Rama, the son of Dasaratha, who is equal to Varuna and Mahendra and ever engaged in the welfare of all beings.

" How can a king, fixed in his duty, look upon another's wife? O Thou of mighty prowess, it is for thee particularly to defend the consorts of kings, therefore control thy base inclination to insult the wife of another. A noble person will ever eschew that which may bring reproach on him, and protects another's wife as if she were his own.

" O Delight of Poulastya, whether it concerns that which is expedient or agreeable, in the absence of the authority of the scriptures, men of honour follow the example of a king in matters of duty. A king represents duty, a king represents desire and is the supreme treasury of his subjects ; he is the root of good and evil.

" O King of the Titans, thou art wicked and fickle by nature; how hast thou obtained a kingdom, like unto a sinner winning the celestial abode? It is hard for an unruly and passionate man to change his nature ; noble counsels are not long remembered by perverse persons. Since the mighty and virtuous Rama has never done a wrong in thy kingdom or capital, why dost thou seek to provoke him? Is Rama of irreproach-

able action to blame if he slew the wicked Khara in Janasthana on account of Shurpanakha? Why dost thou seek to bear away the consort of that Lord of Men? Release Vaidehi this instant, lest, with his dread glance resembling a glowing brazier, he consume thee, as Indra reduced Vritra to ashes with his thunderbolt.

"O Ravana, thou art unwittingly carrying a highly venomous serpent in thy robe; without discerning it, thou art wearing the noose of death round thy neck. A man should only bear that weight which will not crush him and eat only that which does not give rise to sickness. Who will engage himself in an act which is neither praiseworthy, just, nor honourable, and which will cost him his life?

"O Ravana, I am sixty thousand years old and have ruled over the domain of mine ancestors with justice. I am exceedingly aged, thou art youthful and furnished with a bow, armour and arrows, mounted on a car, yet thou shalt not escape without injury, if thou seekest to bear Vaidehi away. Thou shalt no more be able to carry her away by force in my presence, than it is possible to destroy the wisdom of the Veda by logic.

"If thou art not afraid, O Ravana, then halt an instant and fight! Thou shalt fall on the earth as Khara before thee! Rama, clad in robes of bark, who more than once vanquished the Daityas and Danavas in the field, would soon have slain thee in combat. As for me, what can I do? The two princes are far away and undoubtedly thou art fleeing in all haste in fear of them, Thou Wretch! Yet while I still live, thou shalt not bear away the lovely Sita, the beloved consort of Rama, whose eyes resemble the petals of the lotus. Even at the risk of my life I shall render this service to the magnanimous Rama, as if to King Dasaratha himself. Stay! Stay! O Dashagriva, reflect but for a moment. O Ravana, I shall hurl thee from thy great chariot like a ripe fruit from its stalk! O Prowler of the Night, I challenge thee to fight to the last."

CHAPTER 51

The Combat between Jatayu and Ravana

WHILE Jatayu, the King of Birds, was speaking thus, Ravana, that Indra among Men, wearing golden earrings, his eyes red with anger, fell upon him and a terrible struggle ensued in the sky, resembling clouds impelled by the force of the wind; in that conflict Jatayu, King of Vultures, and Ravana, the Lord of the Titans, resembled two vast winged mountains.

Then Ravana began to shower innumerable steel-pointed shafts on the mighty King of the Vultures, but he, the chief of those whose wings are their chariot, received them unmoved and with his feet and sharp talons that foremost of birds inflicted countless wounds on the titan. Thereupon Dashagriva, filled with fury, anxious to destroy his adversary, taking out formidable shafts, equal to the God of Death, drew his bow up to his ear and pierced the vulture with those arrows, which, flying straight at their target, penetrated it with their steely points.

Seeing the daughter of Janaka, her eyes bathed in tears, in the titan's car, Jatayu, disregarding those shafts, hurled himself at his opponent and, with his claws that valiant prince of the feathered tribe broke that bow decorated with pearls and gems and the arrows also.

Thereupon Ravana, transported with anger, seized another bow and covered him with a hail of hundreds and thousands of arrows. Buried beneath those shafts, Jatayu resembled a bird in its nest, but flapping his wings, he broke through that cloud of arrows and with his sharp claws snapped that mighty bow; with a stroke of his wings he shattered Ravana's blazing shield, that resembled fire, and brushed aside the flaming darts that encompassed him.

Then Jatayu, in that conflict, slew the swift-coursing mules with demons' heads, harnessed with gold, and demolished the chariot of Ravana, furnished with a triple standard of bamboo staves, which was driven by thought alone, bright as

fire, its steps studded with precious gems. With a single movement of his wings, Jatayu struck down the canopy, like unto a full moon, with the chowries and the titans who wielded them.

His bow shattered, bereft of his chariot, horses and charioteer, Ravana sprang to the ground, clasping Sita to his breast. Seeing Ravana descend, his car destroyed, all beings voiced their delight and praised the King of the Vultures again and again, paying obeisance to him.

Ravana, however, perceiving that winged hero to be failing through exhaustion and age, greatly encouraged, rose high into the air, clasping the daughter of Janaka to him. Though without a bow, his other weapons being broken in combat, possessing his sword alone, he clasped Janaki passionately to his breast. Then the King of the Vultures darted towards him, barring his passage, and said to him :—

"O Insensate One, thou art carrying away the beloved consort of Rama, radiant as lightning; it is to thy perdition that thou hast brought about her abduction. Like thirsty men drinking water, thou art swallowing poison, with thy friends, kinsfolk, ministers, army and people. Those who through want of discrimination fail to foresee the consequences of their acts soon perish, as thou too shalt meet thine end. Caught in the noose of death, whither wilt thou flee? Thou art like unto the fish that swallows the hook as well as the bait. Assuredly those two invincible heroes, Offspring of the House of Raghu, will not brook the violation of their domicile. The deed that thou hast basely committed will be denounced by the world, as the path frequented by brigands is eschewed by honest people. If thou art not a coward, fight, O Ravana, or pause an instant and thou shalt lie dead on the earth, as did thy brother Khara. Truly thou art engaged in that which will prove thy destruction, as one on the brink of death commits an impious deed. Those actions leading to evil are not undertaken even by the Lord of Creation, Swyambhu Himself."

Uttering these harsh words, the valiant Jatayu swooped on the ten-headed demon and, seizing him in his claws, tore his flesh like the rider of a restive elephant. Inflicting deep wounds, he plunged his beak into his back and tore his hair

with his talons. Thus assailed by the Vulture King, the titan, trembling with rage, pressing Vaidehi to his left side, foaming with anger, struck Jatayu with the palm of his hand, whereupon the mighty vulture Jatayu, the Destroyer of his Foes, hurled himself on Dashagriva and with his beak tore off his ten left arms. His arms being severed, in an instant as many others sprang up again, like serpents issuing from an ant heap, spitting forth poison.

Then, in his anger, the mighty Dashagriva released Sita in order to beat off the King of the Vultures with his fists and feet, and a mighty struggle arose between those two intrepid combatants, the Chief of the Titans and the Foremost of Birds, until Ravana, drawing his sword, cut off the wings and feet of Jatayu, piercing the side of that champion of Rama. The Ranger of the Skies having sundered the two wings of that King of Vultures, Jatayu fell to the earth, at the point of death, and seeing him on the ground, bathed in blood, Vaidehi, exceedingly distressed, darted towards him, as to one of her own kin.

Then the Lord of Lanka beheld that noble bird of exceeding prowess, with his yellow breast and plumage resembling a dark cloud, lying on the earth, like an extinguished torch, whereupon the weeping Sita, daughter of Janaka, whose countenance was like unto the full moon, pressed that winged creature, victim of the wanton Ravana, to her breast.

CHAPTER 52

Jatayu being slain, Ravana resumes his Flight

BEHOLDING that King of the Vultures struck down by Ravana, she whose face was as fair as the moon, stricken with grief, burst into lamentation, crying :—

" Visions, omens, dreams and the cries of birds are the inevitable signs of good and evil fortune among men. O Kakutstha, because of me wild beasts and birds are fleeing away; dost thou not understand that a great calamity has befallen

me? O Rama, this bird, out of pity for me, sought to deliver me and now lies dying on the earth owing to mine evil fate! O Kakutstha, O Lakshmana, hasten to mine aid!"

Thus did that lovely woman cry in her terror, as if they could hear her, and the Chief of the Titans, Ravana, continued to pursue her, who, far from her protectors, bearing a faded garland, was calling for aid. Clinging to the trees like a twining creeper, crying: "Save me! Save me!", she ran hither and thither pursued by the King of the Titans. Bereft of Raghava, who was far away in the forest, she was calling "Rama, Rama!" when Ravana, resembling death itself, to his destruction seized her by the hair.

At this outrage, the whole universe of animate and inanimate beings trembled and a profound darkness covered all. The wind grew still, the sun dim, and the Grandsire of the World, Swyambhu Himself, through his divine power seeing Sita overcome, exclaimed: "Our purpose is accomplished!" Perceiving violent hands laid on Sita, the illustrious Sages inhabiting the Dandaka Forest, recognising that the destruction of Ravana was now assured, were filled with joy!

The Lord of the Titans, however, laying hold of Sita who was weeping and crying out: "Rama! Rama! O Lakshmana!" ascended with her into the air.

Of the hue of molten gold, attired in a yellow sari, that daughter of a king resembled lightning athwart the clouds; her silken robe, streaming in the wind, lent Ravana the semblance of a blazing volcano, and the coppery and fragrant lotus leaves, falling from Vaidehi of incomparable beauty, covered him. Her yellow silken robe floating in the air resembled a cloud illumined by the setting sun, but her pure countenance, as she was being transported through space far from Rama, had lost its radiance, like a lotus detached from its stalk.

Resembling the moon that rises from the heart of a dark cloud, Sita, her fair brows crowned with lovely locks, appeared like a lotus in flower that had lost its brilliance.

With her sharp and brilliant teeth, glorious eyes, well-formed nose, sweet mouth and ruby lips, she resembled the moon, lovely to look upon, and transported through the air

in Ravana's lap, her face, bathed in tears, shone as faintly as does that orb during the daylight hours.

The golden-hued Sita seen against the dark-bodied titan looked like the girth of gold encircling an elephant. Like unto the yellow lotus, the daughter of Janaka with her shining ornaments irradiated Ravana as lightning illumines a thundercloud, and accompanied by the clashing of her jewels the King of the Demons appeared like unto a muttering cloud.

As Sita was being borne away, the petals from her hair fell in a shower on the earth, and this rain of blossom, caused by Ravana's rapid flight, covered him also, as a wreath of stars encircles Mount Meru, and suddenly her anklet, encrusted with pearls, struck the earth like a flash of lightning.

Like rosy twigs she covered the dark limbs of the King of the Titans with a radiance equal to the golden girth of an elephant and, as a mighty meteor illumines the heavens with its splendour, so was she borne through the air by the younger brother of Vaishravana.

Her jewels, flashing like fire, fell tinkling on the earth, where they broke into pieces, like meteors falling from the firmament, and her chain of pearls, bright as the moon, fell from her breast, emitting a blaze of light, like the Ganges falling from heaven.

The trees, sheltering a myriad birds, buffetted by the following wind that swayed the topmost branches, seemed to whisper "Fear not!" and the lakes, carpeted with faded lotuses, filled with fish and stricken aquatic creatures, appeared to be weeping for Maithili as for a friend. Rushing in wrath from all sides, lions, tigers and other beasts and birds followed Sita's shadow, and the mountains too, with their cataracts like faces bathed in tears, their crests like arms upraised, seemed to lament for Sita, as she was being borne away. Beholding Vaidehi carried through the air, the glorious sun, oppressed with sadness, lost its brilliance and became but a pale disc.

"There is neither justice, equity, nor truth, nor sincerity, nor kindness, since the consort of Rama, the Princess of Videha, is being carried away by Ravana." Thus did the assembled beings lament, whilst the young of the wild creatures, forlorn and terrified, emitted plaintive cries. Lifting up their eyes,

glassy with fear, again and again, the forest Deities, trembling in every limb, witnessed the anguish of Vaidehi, who was being borne away so cruelly and who was constantly looking towards the earth and crying in faint accents: " O Lakshmana, O Rama ".

The guileless Vaidehi, her hair streaming behind her, her tilaka effaced, was borne away by Dashagriva to his own destruction, and Maithili with her beautiful teeth and gracious smile, bereft of her friends, not beholding Rama or Lakshmana, grew pale and felt herself wholly crushed under the weight of her despair.

CHAPTER 53

Sita censures Ravana

FINDING herself borne through space, Maithili, the daughter of Janaka, greatly alarmed and filled with distress, in an access of fear, her eyes red with tears and indignation, her voice broken by sobs, addressed that ferocious King of the Titans who was bearing her away, in plaintive tones, saying :—,

" O Base Wretch, art thou not ashamed of this act ? Knowing me to be alone, thou hast laid hands on me and carried me away. O Sinful Being, thou it was who, seeking to abduct me, didst in the form of a deer lure my lord away by the power of illusion.

" The King of the Vultures, that friend of my father-in-law, who sought to defend me, lies slain ! Verily thou hast shown great courage, O Last of the Titans ! To thine eternal shame, thou didst not win me in fair fight but without disclosing thy name ![1] Dost thou not blush to commit such an outrage ? Wretch that thou art, to bear away a woman who is defenceless and the wife of another ! Thy dishonourable exploit will be proclaimed throughout the worlds. Cursed be thou, O Infamous Barbarian, who boasteth of thine heroism ! Cursed be such valour and prowess, O Thou, the Obloquy of thy Race,

[1] It was traditional to make one's name known before entering into combat.

cursed be thou in the world, for thy conduct! How should any restrain thee who fleest so precipitately? Halt but for an instant and thy life is forfeit! Shouldst thou come within the range of those two Kings of Men, thou wouldst not survive for a single moment even wert thou supported by an army! As a bird is not able to bear the blazing forest fire, neither couldst thou withstand the least of their shafts; therefore, for thine own good, release me instantly, O Ravana!

"Provoked by mine abduction, my lord with the aid of his brother will strive to destroy thee if thou dost not let me go. Thine evil intention, on account of which thou dost seek to bear me away, that vile purpose, will never find fulfilment; for even were I never again to see my lord, who is endowed with supreme wisdom and should fall a victim to an enemy, I should not survive long.

"Thou dost disregard thine own good and resemblest one who, in his last hour, chooses what is fatal to him; none who desires his end courts that which will save him. I see the noose of death about thy neck, since thou dost not tremble in this exigency, O Titan. Without doubt, thou shalt see those golden trees, with leaves like sharp swords and the dreadful river Vaitarani flowing with blood and the terrible forest and Shamali tree, with its flowers of refined gold and its leaves of emerald, bristling with iron thorns.[1]

"Having offered this affront to the high-souled Rama, thou shalt not survive the poison that thou hast swallowed, O Merciless One. Thou art caught fast in the noose of death; whither wilt thou turn for refuge from my magnanimous lord? He who, in the twinkling of an eye, without his brother, destroyed fourteen thousand demons in combat, how should that hero, issue of the House of Raghu, skilled in the use of every weapon, full of valour, not pierce thee with his pointed shafts, thou who hast carried away his beloved spouse?"

With these defiant words and others uttered in plaintive tones, Vaidehi, borne away in Ravana's arms, addressed him, though filled with grief and fear. Yet, despite her distress and lamentations, Ravana continued on his way, bearing that sweet and gentle princess, still struggling to break free.

[1] In the region of Hell.

CHAPTER 54

Ravana reaches Lanka with Sita

BORNE away by Ravana, Vaidehi, seeing none who would defend her, suddenly observed five powerful monkeys standing on the summit of a mountain.

Thereupon that large-eyed princess of surpassing charms, let fall among them her silken mantle, bright as gold and her rich jewels. Reflecting 'May they convey the tidings to Rama', the beautiful Sita dropped her cloak and ornaments in their midst.

In his anxiety the red-eyed Dashagriva did not observe this proceeding but these excellent monkeys beheld the large-eyed Sita, who did not move her eyelids as she was crying out.[1] Then that Lord of the Titans, passing beyond the Pampa lake, his face turned towards Lanka, continued on his way, clasping the wailing Maithili. Although experiencing a transport of joy, Ravana in truth was carrying his own destruction in his arms, like a sharp-toothed and poisonous serpent.

Coursing through the air, he left behind forest, rivers, mountains and lakes and speeding on like an arrow shot from, a bow he passed over that sanctuary of whales and crocodiles, the indestructible abode of Varuna, the refuge of rivers, the ocean. Beholding Sita borne away, the waters became convulsed and the great serpents and fish were startled.

Then the voices of the Charanas and Siddhas could be heard in the sky, saying: "The end of Dashagriva is at hand!". Ravana however, who symbolised death itself, bearing the struggling Sita in his lap, entered the city of Lanka.

Reaching that capital with its broad and spacious highways, he entered the palace and penetrated into the inner appartments. It was there that the dark-browed Sita, a prey to grief and despair, was set down by Ravana in his own domain, as Maya sheds his illusion.

[1] Thus not betraying her intention to Ravana.

Then Ravana addressed those demons of dreadful aspect, saying :—

" Let none look on Sita without mine authority ! It is my will that she have pearls, rubies, robes and ornaments to the extent of her desire ! Whoever speaks harshly to her, either knowingly or unknowingly, will forfeit his life ! "

Having spoken thus to the titan women, Ravana left the inner apartment and began to reflect on what more should now be done.

Observing eight valiant, flesh-eating titans, that exceedingly powerful One, blinded by the boon he had received, after extolling their strength and heroism, said to them :—

" Equipped with every kind of weapon, betake yourselves with all speed to Janasthana, where Khara formerly dwelt and, summoning up your courage, banishing all fear, establish yourselves in that place, which is now a desert on account of the massacre of the titans. A great and mighty army was entrenched in Janasthana, which, with Khara and Dushana, was destroyed in combat with Rama. Since that time, an inordinate rage which I am unable to control has taken possession of me, precluding all rest. I wish to avenge myself on my sworn enemy, nor shall I sleep till I have slain him in fight. In the hour that I bring about the death of the slayer of Khara and Dushana, I shall rejoice, as a beggar on the acquisition of wealth.

" Established in Janasthana, keep me scrupulously informed concerning Rama and his movements. Without respite, let the Rangers of the Night take action and constantly strive to bring about Rama's end. Being acquainted with your valour, which I have often witnessed in the field, I have chosen you to repair to Janasthana."

Hearing these flattering and significant words of Ravana's, those titans, bowing down to him, left Lanka in a body and took the direction of Janasthana in all haste, having first made themselves invisible.

But Ravana, having secured Mithila's daughter and brought her to the palace, though he had thus incurred the hostility of Rama, gave himself up to transports of senseless joy.

CHAPTER 55

Ravana implores Sita to become his Consort

HAVING issued commands to those eight titans, renowned for their prowess, Ravana, whose perception was clouded, considered that he had prepared himself for every eventuality.

Brooding on Vaidehi, sorely pierced by the shafts of the God of Love, he hastened to his sumptuous apartments, inflamed with desire for her presence. Entering there, Ravana, the King of the Titans, observed Sita overcome with grief, surrounded by titan women, like a ship foundering in the sea at the mercy of a storm or a gazelle separated from the herd beset by hounds.

Then Ravana approaching that princess, whose head was bowed and who was disconsolate, compelled her to view that mansion resembling the abode of the Gods, containing many storeys and spacious apartments, inhabited by innumerable women and enriched by countless gems, whilst flocks of birds filled it with their carolling. Graceful pillars of gold, ivory, crystal and silver, encrusted with emeralds and diamonds could be seen and celestial gongs resounded there.

Ravana, in company with Sita, ascended the magnificent golden stairway, ornamented with burnished gold. Those lofty buildings possessed excellent windows of gold and ivory covered with golden trellises, and their marble floors were inlaid with precious stones that shed their lustre everywhere. Then Dashagriva showed Maithili the fountains and pools covered with lotuses and every kind of flower; all this did he bring to the notice of Sita who was overcome with grief; and after directing Vaidehi's attention to the splendours of the palace, that perverse wretch, with the intention of seducing her, said:

" O Sita, apart from the aged and the children, ten thousand titans, rangers of the night, all of whom are famed for their exploits, acknowledge me as their lord, and each among them

has placed a thousand loyal servants at my disposal. This entire state, as also my life, is thine, O Large-eyed Lady. Thou art dearer to me than life itself! O Sita, become the queen of those numerous excellent women who are my wives. O Beloved, be my consort, it is to thine advantage. What boots it to consider aught else, do thou give my proposal thy consideration; it behoves thee to look favourably on me, who am burning with desire.

"Surrounded by the ocean, this city of Lanka, extending for a hundred yojanas, can never be taken by storm, even by the Gods themselves with Indra at their head. Among the Celestials, Yakshas, Gandharvas and Nagas, I can see none in all the worlds equal to me in prowess. Deprived of his kingdom, without possessions, dedicated to ascetic practices, travelling on foot, what canst thou hope from Rama, a mere man without resources?

"O Sita, I am a consort worthy of thee, do thou accept me; youth soon passes, O Darling; enjoy these delights with me. O Lady of charming mien, do not think of seeing Raghava again. How could he come hither even in thought? Who can fetter the impetuous wind in the sky or seize the pure flame of a brazier? None in the Three Worlds may snatch thee from mine arms. Do thou rule over this vast empire of Lanka and all beings, animate and inanimate; even I and the Gods shall be thy servants. Laving thyself in the crystal waters, be happy and live in delight. Thy former evil karma has been expiated by the time passed by thee in the forest. It is here that thou wilt be able to pluck the fruit of thy good deeds. In my company, O Maithili, enjoy these garlands with their divine fragrance and these magnificent ornaments. With me do thou disport thyself in the aerial chariot Puskpaka, bright as the sun, that was once Vaishravana's, which I won by my prowess in combat, that vast and beautiful car, swift as thought.

"Thy countenance, flawless and lovely to look upon, pure as a lotus, is wan on account of sorrow and has lost its radiance, O Lady of lovely limbs and gracious features."

Whilst he was speaking, the beautiful Sita covered her face that sparkled like the moon with the hem of her robe and allowed her tears to flow.

Thereat the sinful Ravana, that Ranger of the Night, addressed Sita who was sunk in thought and forlorn, her cheeks pale on account of grief, saying :—

" O Vaidehi, do not fear to contravene dharma ; the ceremony that shall consecrate our union is sanctioned by the Veda ! I press thy tender feet with my heads ; grant my prayer speedily ! I am thy slave and ever obedient to thee ! May these words, inspired by the torments of love, not prove fruitless ; never before has Ravana bowed his head before a woman."

Having spoken thus to Maithili, the daughter of Janaka, Dashagriva under the sway of destiny, thought : " She is mine ! "

CHAPTER 56

Sita is guarded by the Titan Women

HEARING these words, Vaidehi, though still distressed, ceased to tremble and placed a blade of grass between herself and Ravana, saying :—

" King Dasaratha, the indestructible rampart of justice, whose piety brought him renown, had a son, Raghava. Famed in the Three Worlds, that virtuous one, possessed of powerful arms and large eyes, is my God and my lord. It is he, that hero, born in the House of Ikshwaku, illustrious, possessing shoulders like unto a lion's, who, with his brother Lakshmana will rob thee of thy life !

" Hadst thou laid violent hands on me in his presence, he would have compelled thee to refrain and would have slain thee in single combat, even as he slew Khara himself in Janasthana. Those titans of grim visage, whom thou dost extol to me, valiant though they be, would be deprived of their power in Raghava's presence, as serpents yield up their poison before Suparna. Those golden shafts, loosed from the string of Rama's bow, would pierce their bodies, as the Ganges bears away her banks ! Though thou mayest not be slain by

Asuras or Gods, yet now that thou hast incurred the fury of Raghava, thou wilt not escape alive.

"Thou hast but a short time to live! Raghava will compass thine end! That life which thou deemest impossible to lose is as a beast's bound to the sacrificial stake! If Rama lets fall on thee his glance inflamed with ire, thou wilt instantly be consumed, O Titan, as Mamatha by Rudra! He, who is able to bring down the moon from the skies and destroy it or dry up the ocean, is assuredly able to deliver Sita. Thy life, thy prosperity, thy being and faculties are forfeit; Lanka, bereft of its inhabitants, will be left desolate through thy fault. Nay, this outrage will bring thee nought but misfortune, O Thou who in the absence of my lord didst bear me away by force, never more wilt thou know felicity!

"My illustrious lord, accompanied by his brother, depending on his own energy, does not fear to live in the Dandaka Forest. Thy prowess, thy strength, thine arrogance and thy presumption, will all be wiped out under the rain of his shafts in battle. When the hour, appointed by destiny for the destruction of beings, is at hand, they become mad under its sway. Mine abduction presages thine end and that of the titans and of those dwelling in the inner apartments. As an untouchable may not approach the sacred altar, furnished with ladles and vessels of worship at the time of sacrifice, so the legitimate spouse of one fixed in virtue, faithful to his vows, may not be approached by a sinner such as thou, O Last of the Titans!

"How should a royal swan, sporting amidst the tufts of lotuses with her mate, concern herself with a cormorant on the bank? Bind or destroy this insentient body[1], I have neither desire to preserve it nor my life, O Titan, for I will never submit to dishonour."

After speaking thus in her wrath, causing the blood to freeze, Vaidehi became silent, and Ravana answered her in menacing tones, saying: "Reflect well, O Lovely Princess; if thou dost not yield to me within the period of twelve months, my cooks shall cut thee to pieces for my morning repast."

[1] Implying that the body itself is inanimate when not energised by Consciousness.

Having spoken thus, Ravana, the Challenger of His Foes, exceedingly wroth, addressed those female titans in these words :—

" Ye terrible demons of ferocious aspect, who subsist on flesh and blood, do ye instantly crush the pride of this woman! "

When he had said this, those monsters of fearful aspect, joining hands, surrounded Maithili, and Ravana commanded those women, formidable to look upon, who walking struck the earth with such force that it shook, saying :—

" Do yc take Maithili to the centre of the Ashoka grove, and there, encircling her mount guard over her secretly, and sometimes by menaces and at others by soft speech seek in every way to break her will, as one would a female elephant."

Thus commanded by Ravana, those titan woman, taking hold of Maithili, dragged her to the Ashoka grove which was planted with trees covered with flowers of every kind and many fruits, able to satisfy every desire, where birds disported themselves in love.

And, as a gazelle in the midst of tigresses, Sita, the daughter of Janaka, her limbs giving way under her despair, fell under the sway of those titans.

Like a timid antelope taken in a snare, Maithili, the daughter of Janaka, overwhelmed with grief and fear, could find no relief. And threatened by those terrible monsters, the Princess of Mithila, unable to rest, remembering her lord and beloved brother-in-law, under the weight of terror and sorrow, swooned away.

CHAPTER 57

Rama sees Terrible Portents

HAVING slain Maricha, that titan able to change his shape at will who wandered about in the form of a deer, Rama took his way back to the hermitage with all speed, eager to behold Maithili and, as he hastened on, jackals began to howl mournfully behind him. Hearing those dismal sounds, causing him

to tremble, Rama, seized with alarm, reflected: "Is Vaidehi safe and well or has she become a prey to the titans? The cry raised by Maricha in the guise of a deer, imitating my voice, if heard by Lakshmana, may cause him to leave Sita in order to come to mine aid! It may be that the titans have resolved to slay Sita and for this reason Maricha, in the form of a gazelle, lured me away! Having brought me a great distance, that titan fell a victim to my shafts and feigning my voice, cried out: 'O Lakshmana, I am slain!' Is all well with them, deprived of my presence in the forest? On account of Janasthana, I have rendered myself hateful to the titans, and many and dreadful are the portents I now see around me."

Reflecting thus on hearing the jackals' cries, Rama hurriedly made his way towards the hermitage, pondering on the means adopted by the titan in assuming the form of a deer to lure him far away from his dear ones.

Directing his steps towards Janasthana, his heart filled with apprehension, he observed the birds and beasts passing to his left, emitting fearful cries, and witnessing these dreadful signs Raghava beheld Lakshmana approaching, pale of mien. Already a prey to anxiety, Rama became even more distressed on seeing his brother thus cast down.

Observing that he had left Sita alone in the solitary wood frequented by titans, taking Lakshmana by the left hand, he spoke to him in a gentle voice, in sad and reproachful tones, saying:—

"Ah! Lakshmana, thou hast done wrong to come hither, leaving Sita unprotected. O My Friend, how can this prove auspicious? Assuredly the daughter of Janaka has been slain or even devoured by the titans who range the woods! Since so many evil portents have appeared to me, O Lakshmana, I question whether we shall find Sita, the daughter of Janaka, alive, O Lion among Men! Since this multitude of beasts and jackals are emitting fearful cries and the birds also, as they fly towards the south, I fear that all is not well with that king's daughter, O Hero of great prowess!

"That titan, wearing the form of a deer, deceived me and drew me far from the hermitage. Having slain him with difficulty, at the point of death, he revealed himself to me in

his true form. My heart is heavy and bereft of all delight, and my left eye throbs. Undoubtedly, O Lakshmana, Sita is no longer there and has either been carried away or is dead or lost in the forest."

CHAPTER 58

Rama's Lament

SEEING Lakshmana, cast down and dejected, approaching without Vaidehi, the virtuous son of Dasaratha enquired of him, saying :—

" O Lakshmana, where is Vaidehi, who followed me to the Dandaka Forest and whom thou hast left alone to come hither? Where is that one of graceful form, the companion of my misfortune when I was banished from my kingdom and, dispirited, roamed the Dandaka Forest; where is Sita, without whom I cannot live for an instant, my life's companion, who resembled a daughter of the Gods?

" O Hero, separated from that daughter of Janaka, whose skin was like gold, I have neither a desire for the sovereignty of the Gods or the earth. O Lakshmana, Sita is dearer to me than life itself. O Saumitri, has my banishment been rendered void? If, on account of Sita, I should die and thou return to the city alone, will it not prove the consummation of Kaikeyi's desires and she find felicity? Will not Kaushalya, her son dead, become the abject slave of Kaikeyi when, having accomplished her design, she rules the dominion with her son? If Vaidehi still lives, I will return to the hermitage, but if my virtuous spouse be dead, I shall yield up my life, O Lakshmana! If on returning to the ashrama the daughter of Videha, whose words were ever preceded by a smile, does not speak to me, I shall renounce my life.

" Tell me, O Lakshmana, if Vaidehi is living or no, or whether in consequence of thy leaving her that unfortunate creature has been devoured by the titans. Alas! The wretched Sita, so tender and fragile, never having experienced unhappiness,

will be wholly desolate in mine absence. Did that titan, full of cunning and craft, crying out ' O Lakshmana ', inspire thee with fear ? I surmise that Vaidehi, hearing that cry for help uttered in a voice resembling mine, besought thee to find out what had become of me and thou didst come hither with all speed. Thou hast done an irretrievable wrong in abandoning Sita in the forest, thus affording those cruel and ruthless titans an opportunity for avenging themselves. Those flesh-eating demons are aggrieved on account of Khara's death and now, without doubt, have slain Sita. Alas ! I am wholly submerged in an ocean of sorrow, O Destroyer of thy Foes ! What shall I do now ; I tremble before that which awaits me ! "

Thus immersed in the thought of Sita, that paragon among women, Raghava hastened towards Janasthana in company with Lakshmana.

Heaping reproaches on his younger brother, who was overwhelmed with distress, tormented by hunger, fatigue and thirst, Rama, sighing heavily, his countenance pale, a prey to despair, entered his hermitage and found it deserted.

Returning to the ashrama, that hero ran hither and thither where Sita was wont to disport herself and, recollecting those haunts where she used to roam, he became distracted, his hair standing on end.

CHAPTER 59

Rama reproaches Lakshmana

ISSUING from the hermitage, Rama, the Delight of the House of Raghu, continued to address Lakshmana in a faint voice, saying :—

" Having confided Maithili to thy care during mine absence in the forest, why didst thou abandon her ? Seeing thee appear alone, having left Maithili unprotected, my spirit was troubled, apprehending grave danger. O Lakshmana, watching thee approach from a distance unaccompanied by Sita, my left eye and arm twitched and my heart throbbed."

At these words, the son of Sumitra, who bore the marks of royalty, was seized with distress and said to the stricken Rama:—

" Nay, it was not of myself that I came hither, nor of mine own inclination that I left Sita and set out to meet thee, but I was urged thereto by her entreaties to come to thine aid.

" The cry, ' O Lakshmana, save me ! ' as if uttered by her lord, broke on Maithili's ears and she, hearing this despairing call, from affection for thee, weeping and filled with terror, said unto me : ' Go ! Go ! '. While she thus continued to urge me, repeating ' Go ', I spoke to her, seeking to reassure her, saying : ' I know of no titan who can excite Rama's fear ; it is not he, but another who calls, O Sita. How should that illustrious warrior, the inspirer of awe in the Gods themselves, utter so base and shameful a word as ' save me ' ? Who has imitated the voice of my brother and pronounced these cowardly words and for what motive ? Assuredly it is a demon who, in his extremity, has uttered the cry, ' Help ! '. O Lovely One, it does not become thee to tremble like a low-born woman ! Take courage, calm thyself and banish thine anxiety. There is none born, nor yet to be born in the Three Worlds, who is able to triumph over Raghava in the field in open fight. He is incapable of being defeated in combat, even by the Gods with Indra at their head.'

" Thus addressed by me, Vaidehi, distracted and shedding tears, uttered these cruel words :—

" ' O Lakshmana, in thine extreme perversity thou seekest to unite thyself with me on the death of thy brother but thou shalt never possess me ! It is on Bharata's instigation that thou hast accompanied Rama, since, despite his despairing cry, thou dost not go to his aid. Concealing thy true purpose, thou hast treacherously followed Rama for my sake and for this reason dost refuse to assist him.'

" Hearing Vaidehi's words, I left the hermitage, my lips trembling, mine eyes inflamed with wrath."

When Saumitri had spoken thus, Rama, who was distracted with anxiety, said to him : " O Friend, thou hast done a great wrong by coming hither without Sita. Thou knowest well that I am able to defend myself against the titans, yet on account of a hasty word thou didst abandon Vaidehi.

" I am not pleased that thou didst leave her nor that thou hast come here on account of the reproaches of an indignant woman. Submitting to Sita and giving way to the impulse of anger has caused thee to contravene the spiritual law and disobey my command.

" That titan who assumed the form of a deer in order to lure me from the hermitage now lies stricken by mine arrows. Stretching my bow, I placed an arrow on it and loosed it, as it were in sport, laying him low.

" Discarding his deer's form and assuming the shape of a titan adorned with bracelets, he emitted cries of agony; thereafter feigning my voice, in accents capable of being heard afar off, he called out, and on hearing that sinister cry thou didst abandon Maithili and came hither."

CHAPTER 60

The Search for Sita

As Rama hastened on, his left eye began to twitch ; he stumbled and was seized with a fit of trembling. Observing these inauspicious signs, he enquired repeatedly of Lakshmana :—
" Can all be well with Sita ? "

Eager to see her again, he quickened his pace and hastened on, but when he reached the hermitage, he found it deserted and, filled with apprehension, began to run hither and thither, searching everywhere. To that descendant of Raghu, his thatched hut, without Sita, appeared like a lake bereft of lotuses, shorn of its beauty at the end of summer.

Seeing the deserted hermitage, with its trees that seemed to be weeping, its flowers faded, the deer and the birds melancholy, bereft of charm, wholly desolate, the forest Deities having forsaken it, the mats and deer-skins lying here and there, the grassy seats withered and trampled upon, Rama began to weep and cry out :—

"Hath that timid one been carried away or killed or devoured or is she drowned or has she hidden herself in the forest? Perchance she has not yet returned from gathering fruit and flowers or she has gone to bring back water from the pools or the river?"

Faint with seeking, without finding any trace of his beloved in the forest, running from tree to tree, scaling the hills, searching by river and stream, lamenting the while and overcome with grief, he appeared like one struggling in a morass!

"O Kedumbra Tree", he cried, "hast thou not seen my dear one, who cherished thee? If thou knowest aught, then tell me where the lovely Sita can be found? O Bilwa Tree! Say hast thou seen her, who wears a silken robe, who is as fair as the young green shoots and whose breasts resemble thy fruit? Or thou, O Arjuna Tree! Give me tidings of the one who loved thee, that daughter of Janaka; dost that frail creature still live? This Kadubha Tree knoweth for certain of Maithili, whose thighs resemble its fruit, and here stands the beautiful Vanaspati enveloped in flowering creepers, buds and leaves, in whose shade the bees hum, undoubtedly thou art the crown of trees! Surely this Tilaka who loved Sita knows where she is now! O Ashoka Tree, dispeller of grief, prove the truth of thy name and allay the pain pressing on my heart by disclosing my loved one to me without delay. O Tala Tree, have pity on me and if thou hast seen that fair damsel, whose breasts resemble thy ripe fruit, do thou tell me! O Jambu Tree, if thou hast seen my dear love, whose radiance resembles the Jambunada, then speak without fear, and thou, the first of the Karnikara trees, whose flowers are of surpassing loveliness, O Gentle One, say, hast thou seen my Beloved?"

Thus did the illustrious Rama question every tree, Cuta, Nipa, giant Sala, Panasa, Kuravasa, also Vakula, Punnaga, Candana and Ketaka trees, running hither and thither in the forest like one demented.

Thereafter he addressed the beasts, saying: "O Deer, do ye not know where Maithili is to be found, whose eyes resembled a gazelle's, who with her doe-like glances was followed by the fawns she had tamed? O Elephant, methinks thou dost know her, whose thighs resembled thy trunk: pray tell me, hast

thou seen her? O Tiger, if thou hast seen my gentle spouse, whose countenance resembled the moon in radiance, then tell me fearlessly.

"Why art thou hiding, O My Beloved? I see thee, O Lotus-eyed One! Do not conceal thyself amidst the trees without replying! Stay! Stay! O Princess of lovely Limbs, hast thou no pity for me? Why dost thou mock me? It is not thy nature to yield thyself to this folly, O Lady of Fair Complexion, it is vain for thee to fly me, thy yellow sari renders thee easily distinguishable, I have seen thee! Stay, if thou hast any love for me! Alas! It is not she—my Sita of gracious smiles! Without doubt, she has perished since my grief leaves her unmoved!

"Assuredly that youthful woman has been devoured in mine absence; Sita, with her lovely countenance, exquisite teeth and lips, shapely nose and beautiful earrings, whose skin resembles the winter jasmine, has perished, and her beauty is extinguished, as the full moon under eclipse. The slender neck of my well-beloved, of the hue of sandal, adorned with a necklace, has been devoured, like that of one poor and helpless, possessing neither kith nor kin.

"O Mighty-armed One, dost thou not see my loved one anywhere? O Where hast thou gone, O Sita, O My Lovely One?"

Thus did Rama lament, and calling, ran from grove to grove, sometimes turning like a whirlwind, sometimes appearing like one who has lost his wits. Intent on finding his love, ranging the forest, scaling the mountain, exploring the rivers and waterfalls, he sped through the woodlands without rest.

Searching on every side without pause, seeking Maithili throughout the forest, hoping to find his Beloved, he became utterly exhausted.

CHAPTER 61

Rama's Plaint

SEEING the hermitage and the hut deserted, with the grassy seats strewn here and there and not finding Vaidehi anywhere, Rama, the son of Dararatha, lifting up his beautiful arms, uttered these sorrowful words :—

" O Lakshmana, where is Vaidehi, where has she gone? O Saumitri, who has carried away or devoured my dearest one? O Sita, if thou hast concealed thyself behind a tree and art mocking me, then bring this jest to an end; thou hast enjoyed my distress long enough! O Darling, the young gazelles with whom thou didst play, languish in thine absence, their eyes filled with tears. Without Sita I cannot live, O Lakshmana, I am overwhelmed with grief on account of her abduction. To-day I shall rejoin that great monarch, my sire, in the other world, who will reproach me, saying: 'How comes it that thou, having left me in order to redeem my vow, art come hither before the appointed time? O Slave of thy desires, thou art bereft of honour and loyalty, woe unto thee!'

" Without doubt, thus will my father address me in the other region! O Cruel One! distracted as I am and overwhelmed with sorrow, thou hast deserted me, as a fair name parts company with a swindler! O Lovely Princess, do not leave me! O Slender-waisted Lady, in the abyss in which thou hast plunged me, I shall yield up my life!"

Thus did Rama lament, desiring to behold Sita once more, but the unfortunate Raghava could not see the daughter of Janaka anywhere. Sunk in misery on account of Sita, he resembled a mighty elephant trapped in marshy ground in which it has set foot.

Then Lakshmana in his ardent desire to console him said:—

" O Hero, O Mine of Wisdom, do not grieve! Let us unitedly put forth our endeavours. This hill is famed for its many caves, and Maithili, who, enamoured of the woods often wandered in these thickets, has doubtless ventured into

the deep forest or visited the lake covered with lotuses in bloom or she has gone to the river filled with fish and frequented by birds of beautiful plumage. Perchance she has hidden herself in the gorge to frighten us and to see if we will search her out. O Lion among Men, let us seek her without delay! O Fortunate Prince, if thou deemest her to be somewhere in the forest, we will leave no quarter unexplored; do not grieve, O Kakutstha!"

These words of Lakshmana, inspired by fraternal affection, comforted Rama, who with Saumitri began to search for Sita once more with a tranquil heart. But ranging the woods, hills, rivers and lakes on every side, searching the plateaus, caves and summits of the mountain, those two sons of Dasaratha could not find Sita anywhere, and having sought her in every part of that mountain Rama said to Lakshmana:—

"I see no trace of the lovely Vaidehi on this mountain, O Saumitri!"

Then Lakshmana in great distress addressed his brother, who was endowed with flaming energy, saying:—"It is by ranging the Dandaka Forest that thou wilt be re-united with Maithili, the daughter of Janaka, O Sagacious One, as Vishnu covered the earth on subduing Bali."

Being thus addressed by the valiant Lakshmana, Raghava, whose heart was heavy with sorrow, answered in piteous accents, saying:—

"The whole forest has been searched with care by us and the lakes where the lotus blooms and this mountain with its many caves and waterfalls also, O Prudent Prince, yet no trace of Vaidehi who is dearer to me than my life's breath can I find."

Thus mourning, Rama, overcome by anxiety, his heart contracted with grief, in an excess of anguish, swooned away. Trembling in every limb, his mind bewildered, stunned and broken, that unhappy prince heaving deep and burning sighs, in a voice strangled with sobs, cried out: "O Sita, O My Beloved!"

Thereupon Lakshmana, distracted with anxiety, sought to console his dear brother by every means, standing before him with joined palms.

But Rama gave no heed to the words that fell from Lakshmana's lips and, not beholding his dear Sita, continued to call upon her again and again.

CHAPTER 62

His Despair

In the absence of Sita, the lotus-eyed, righteous and mighty Rama, his mind distraught with suffering, tortured by love for her, though unable to see her, with bitter sighs, reproached her as if she were present, saying :—

" O Thou, whose youthful flowering is more graceful than the Ashoka branches, do not conceal thyself and increase my pain ! O Darling ! Thy thighs resemble the plaintain boughs which conceal thee, yet, O Goddess, thou canst not hide from me ! Laughing, thou hast taken refuge in the Karnikara grove, but enough of this jesting which is torturing me ! It is not fitting to sport thus in a hermitage, though I know laughter to be natural to thee, O Darling ! Return, O Large-eyed Damsel, thy hut is desolate !

" Alas ! It is certain that those titans have devoured my Sita or borne her away and it is for this reason that she does not appear ; she would never mock me thus in my sorrow, O Lakshmana !

" O Saumitri, observe these deer from whose eyes the tears fall and who seem to say that Sita has been devoured by those Rangers of the Night. O Noble Lady, where hast thou gone ? O My Chaste One, my Lovely One ! Alas ! The desires of Kaikeyi are fulfilled to-day ! I went into exile with Sita and shall now return alone. How shall I enter the palace of the queens bereft of her presence ? Will not the people say : ' He is a heartless wretch ! '

" By the loss of Sita, I shall bear the stigma of cowardice and when my exile is over, Janaka, the King of Mithila, will enquire of me as to our welfare. How shall I answer him ? The Sovereign of Videha, seeing me return without Sita, will be overwhelmed with grief on account of her death and become a prey to madness !

" No, I will never return to Ayodhya ruled over by Bharata; heaven itself would prove a desert without Sita. Do thou leave me in the forest and return to the opulent city of Ayodhya. As for me, I cannot live anywhere without Sita. Embracing Bharata tenderly, say to him in my name: 'It is Rama's command that thou rule the earth.' Making obeisance to our mothers, Kaikeyi, Sumitra and Kaushalya, with due respect, protect them with all thy might, taking counsel of the wise. O Destroyer of Thy Foes, it is for thee to recount to them the death of Sita and mine own, in every detail."

Thus did Raghava lament, while ranging the forest full of distress, far from Sita of lovely locks, whilst Lakshmana, his features blanched with terror, felt himself about to lose his reason in the excess of his grief.

CHAPTER 63

He continues to lament

THAT son of a king, stricken with sorrow and a prey to anxiety, separated from his dear one, having caused his brother distress, fell into deeper and deeper despondency. Sunk in an abyss of grief, Rama with burning sighs and deep groans addressed Lakshmana, who was overwhelmed with anxiety, in words inspired by his own affliction, saying:—

" There is none in the world I deem more wretched than I; misfortune after misfortune follow each other in uninterrupted succession; it is breaking my heart. Surely, formerly I either designed or executed innumerable evil acts and now their fruit has matured and greater and greater calamities beset me! The loss of my kingdom, separation from my relatives, the parting from my mother, the remembrance of these things adds to the sum of mine unhappiness. Yet those griefs were forgotten as also the privations of mine exile in the forest, but now the disappearance of Sita re-

awakens their memory as an almost extinct brazier suddenly bursts into flame.

" My youthful and timid spouse has been carried away through the sky by a titan, emitting heart-rending cries unceasingly in her terror, she who formerly was wont to converse so sweetly. Assuredly the breast of my Beloved, sprinkled with saffron of great price, is now soiled with blood and dust, yet I still live ! Sita, whose speech was gentle, clear and sweet, whose beauty was enhanced by her curly locks, has grown pale, having fallen a prey to the titans and she has lost her radiance, as the moon in the mouth of Rahu. The neck of my beloved and faithful consort, decorated with a string of pearls, may even now have been severed by the titans in some deserted place, where they are drinking her blood. Deprived of my presence, surrounded by titans in the forest where they dwell and borne away by them, the unfortunate large-eyed Sita will be crying out pitifully like a wounded osprey.

" In this valley Sita of gracious mien, sitting beside me, addressed thee with gentle words and sweet smiles, O Lakshmana. Is she perchance wandering on the banks of this most beautiful of rivers, the Godaveri, so loved by her, but no, she was never wont to walk alone ! She whose face resembled the lotus, her eyes like their petals, has gone to gather water lilies, but how is this possible, since without me she would never gather flowers ?

" Has she entered the forest full of blossoming trees, frequented by flocks of birds of every kind ? Alas, no! She was too timid to venture forth alone and would have died of fear ! O Sun, witness of all that takes place on earth and of every act, be it good or evil, has my beloved wandered away or has she been abducted ? O tell me, lest I die of grief ! O Wind, nothing in the world is unknown to thee ; say, has Sita, the flower of her race, lost her way or been carried off, or is she dead ? "

Thus did Rama lament, a victim to grief and despair, and the valiant Saumitri, fixed in his duty, addressed him in words fitting to the occasion saying :—

" O Hero, abandon thy grief and take heart ! Look on the disappearance of thy spouse with detachment and engage with

vigour in thy search for her. Men of spirit do not allow themselves to be cast down, even in the face of extreme adversity."

Thus did the highly powerful Lakshmana speak, despite his distress, but Rama, the foremost of the House of Raghu, paid no heed to his words and once again gave himself up to his great sorrow.

CHAPTER 64

Rama's Wrath

STRICKEN with grief, Rama addressed Lakshmana in broken accents, saying:—" O Lakshmana, repair with all haste to the river Godaveri; it may be that Sita has gone thither to gather lotuses."

At these words, Lakshmana immediately proceeded to the lovely river Godaveri and having visited the sacred fords, returning, spoke to Rama, saying:—

" I have searched all the holy places but I have not seen her anywhere nor does she answer to my call. Where can Vaidehi have gone? I do not know where that lady of slender waist can be, O Rama."

Hearing Lakshmana speak thus, the unfortunate Rama, distracted with anxiety, ran to the banks of the Godaveri river and there cried out:—" Where is Sita?"

But neither the spirits of the forest nor the river dared to inform Rama that she had been borne away by that Indra of Titans who merited death.

The Godaveri, recollecting the former exploits of the wicked Ravana, was restrained by fear from imparting what was known to her of Vaidehi's fate. The river's silence caused Rama to abandon all hope of seeing Sita again and overcome with despair at her disappearance he said to Saumitri:—

" The beloved Godaveri has no answer for me, O Lakshmana. What shall I say to Janaka or Vaidehi's mother when, returning without her, we meet once more? Seeing me without Vaidehi, I shall become an object of odium to them.

" When, dispossessed of my kingdom, I was forced to live in the forest on wild fruits, my misery was assuaged by the

Princess of Videha. Where is she now? Far from my kinsmen, unable to find Vaidehi, how shall I pass the long nights without sleep?

"I have searched everywhere, by the Mandakini, in Janasthana and on the mountain Prasravana to find Sita. O Hero, observe the wild deer, full of energy, who regard me unceasingly and by their glances seem to wish to communicate with me."

Beholding them, that Lion among Men, Raghava, fixing his gaze on them cried:—"Where is Sita?" in a voice broken by sobs. Thus addressed by that Lord of Men, the deer rose and turned their heads towards the south, looking upward, thus indicating the path by which Sita had been borne away.

Thereafter those deer, turning southwards, sometimes fixing their gaze on that Chief of Men and then looking towards the sky, emitted cries, running in front of the two brothers, seeking to attract their attention, and Lakshmana, understanding their movements and their cries, said to his elder brother:—

"O My Lord, since thou accosted these deer saying: 'Where is Sita?' they, rising up, have indicated a southerly direction, let us therefore follow that path; perchance we shall discover some trace of that noble lady or she herself."

"Be it so" answered Kakutstha, directing his step towards the south, followed by Lakshmana. Thereafter casting his gaze on the earth, he observed some flowers scattered on the ground and, exceedingly distressed, said to his brother:—

"O Lakshmana, I remember these flowers, for I gathered them in the forest and gave them to Vaidehi, with these she decorated her hair. Methinks the sun, the wind and the earth have preserved them for my pleasure."

Thereafter Rama addressed the mountain of innumerable torrents, saying:—

"O Lord of the Hills, hast thou seen that princess of lovely limbs, that gracious one I left in this charming grove?"

Thereupon, in tones of anguish he began to threaten that mountain, as a lion roars in the presence of a deer, and cried out:—"O Mountain, show me that lady whose skin resembles beaten gold or I will shatter thy crests."

Thus questioned by Rama concerning Sita, the Princess of Mithila, the mountain would fain have spoken but through

fear of Ravana it remained silent; whereupon the son of Dasaratha addressed that rocky mass, saying:—

"My fiery arrows shall reduce thee to ashes, thou shalt be stripped of thy verdure, thy trees, and thy creepers, and none shall inhabit thee. O Lakshmana, this river too shall be dried up by me if it does not reveal where Sita may be found, whose radiance resembles the full moon in her course."

In his wrath, Rama would fain have consumed the mountain with his glance, when suddenly he beheld the imprint of the titan's foot on the ground and those of Vaidehi, who in her terror had run hither and thither before being dragged away by him.

Seeing the marks of Sita's feet and those of the titan, with the shattered bow, two quivers and parts of the chariot, Rama, his heart beating rapidly, said to his beloved brother:—

"See, O Lakshmana, the scattered fragments of Vaidehi's ornaments and the many garlands and the drops of blood shining like molten gold covering the earth on every side. It is certain, O Lakshmana, that the titans who change their form at will, have hewn the body of Sita to pieces, which they have now devoured. On account of Sita, a terrible struggle has taken place here, O Saumitri.

"This great bow, encrusted with pearls, marvellously inlaid, which is broken and lying on the earth, to whom can it belong, O Friend? To what titan or to what God, O My Child, does this golden armour belong, bright as the rising sun, enriched with emeralds and pearls, the pieces of which are strewn on the earth? Whose canopy is lying here, possessing a hundred staves, decorated with celestial garlands, its supports broken? And whose are these mules, harnessed with gold, having goblins' heads, terrible to behold, that have been slain in the fight? This chariot of war, shining like a flame, which is overturned and broken, to whom does it belong? These arrows too, a hundred fingers in length, of terrifying aspect, their golden tips blunted, lying in a hundred fragments and the two quivers filled with excellent shafts, whose are they?

"See the charioteer lying on the earth, the lash and reins still in his hands, who was his master? Without doubt these footprints are those of a mighty titan, O Lakshmana. Behold

how under a thousand guises the bitter hatred of these titans, who are ruthless and able to change their form at will, is made manifest! Alas, the blessed Vaidehi has been carried hence or she is dead and has been devoured! If virtue was not able to protect Vaidehi from being carried away by stealth in the great forest and she has been devoured, O Lakshmana, how can even the great ones of this world offer me any solace? The supreme Creator of the Universe Himself, were He to manifest compassion, would be misunderstood and held in contempt by the world, and I, who am by nature gentle, who have subdued my senses and who exercise mercy, desiring the welfare of all, shall be thought wanting in valour by the Gods.

" O Lakshmana, my virtues shall be overshadowed to-day, as thou shalt soon witness, and my wrath be manifest in the destruction of the demons and all created beings! As the rising sun obscures the splendour of the moon, so will my great attributes be withdrawn and my naked splendour blaze forth; there will be no escape for any in the Three Worlds, neither Yaksha, Gandharva, Pisacha, Rakshasa, Kinnera, nor man, O Lakshmana. Soon shalt thou see mine arrows filling the firmament, the planets stayed in their courses, the moon veiled, fire and wind restrained, the brightness of the sun obscured, the crests of the mountains shattered, the lakes dried up, creepers and trees uprooted and the ocean drained.

" If the Gods do not bring back Sita to me, I shall blot out the Three Worlds! Then, O Saumitri they will be forced to acknowledge my prowess! None shall find refuge anywhere in space, O Lakshmana; to-day thou shalt see the universe pass beyond its bournes. With the help of the arrows loosed from my bow, which I shall stretch up to mine ear, no being will be able to survive; for Sita's sake I shall rid the world of goblins and demons and the Gods shall witness the power of these missiles, loosed in my wrath.

" The worlds of the Gods, Giants, Yakshas and Titans will be annihilated under the impact of my shafts. With mine arrows I shall shatter the defences of the Three Worlds, if the Gods do not restore Vaidehi to me as she was before she was borne away. If they do not bring back my beloved un-

harmed, I shall lay waste the entire universe and all contained therein. Until I find myself in Sita's presence once more, I shall let loose every weapon of destruction."

Having spoken thus, Rama, his eyes flashing with anger, his lips compressed and trembling, tied fast his robe of bark and deerskin and knotted his hair, whereupon that sagacious One resembled Rudra bent upon the destruction of Tripura.

Taking his bow from Lakshmana's hands, he drew it with might, selecting a terrible steel-pointed shaft resembling a venomous serpent, and the effulgent Rama, filled with wrath, the Scourge of his Foes, resembling the Fire at the destruction of the world, said :—

" As beings cannot escape old age, destiny or death, so is none able to restrain my wrath! O Lakshmana, if I do not recover Sita this day in all her pristine beauty, I shall destroy the universe with its Gods, Gandharvas, human beings, Punnagas and mountains."

CHAPTER 65

Lakshmana seeks to pacify Rama

A PREY to grief on account of Sita's abduction, Rama, resembling the Fire of Dissolution, sought to bring about the destruction of the Worlds.

With burning sighs he contemplated the stringed bow, as Hara at the end of the world-cycle stands ready to consume the universe.

Seeing Rama transported with rage, hitherto never manifested by him, Lakshmana, his features pale with terror, addressed him with joined palms, saying :—

" Formerly thou wert ever gentle, of controlled mind and devoted to the welfare of all beings, do not now give way to wrath and renounce thy true nature. As the radiance of the moon, the brilliance of the sun, the velocity of the wind and the forbearance of the earth, so is thy glory manifested without equal and without end. Wherefore dost thou seek to destroy the worlds on account of one man's sin ?

" It is not yet known to whom this shattered chariot belongs nor because of whom nor between whom, the struggle, of which we see the traces, took place. This spot bears the marks of wheels and feet and is sprinkled with drops of blood ; it is the scene of a desperate struggle, O Son of a King, but it is a fight between single combatants, O Most Eloquent of Men ! I see no trace of a great army and it is not fitting that thou shouldst destroy the worlds on account of one man.

" Kings should always rule with justice, gentleness and moderation. Thou wast ever the refuge of all beings and their supreme asylum. Who would condone the bearing away of thy consort, O Raghava ? Rivers, seas, mountains, Gods, Gandharvas and Danavas have no desire to displease thee, even as the officiating priest will not harm the one undertaking a sacrifice after he has performed the preparatory rites.

" O Prince, it is for thee to seek out Sita's abductor, followed by the great sages and by me with my bow. We will search the ocean, the hills, the forests, the deep caves and innumerable lakes filled with lotuses. We will enquire of the Gods and Gandharvas in every region, until we find the captor of thy consort. If the Chiefs of the Gods do not restore thy wife peaceably, then, O King of Koshala, adopt those measures that thou considerest fitting. If, through gentleness, humility and prudence, thou dost not regain thy spouse, O Indra among Men, then let loose thine innumerable golden-tipped arrows, resembling Mahendra's thunderbolts."

CHAPTER 66

Lakshmana seeks to inspire Rama with Courage

OVERCOME by grief and wailing like one orphaned, Rama, sick at heart, was plunged in misery, whereupon Lakshmana, the son of Sumitra, taking hold of his feet and pressing them, sought to console and comfort him, saying :—

" By great austerity and innumerable pious acts did the King Dasaratha obtain thee, as the Celestials acquired the

Nectar of Immortality. Bound to thee by thy virtues, that great monarch on thy departure returned to the heavenly region, thus have we heard from Bharata. If thou art not able to endure the calamity that has overtaken thee, then how should an ordinary man do so?

"O Chief of Men, take courage! What living being is not subject to adversity, which approaches like a flame and instantly passes away? Even so is the world. Did not Yayati, the son of Nahusha, fall from heaven overcome by ill fortune? In a single day the great Sage Vasishtha, the chief priest of our sire, was bereft of four hundred sons born to him; and the Mother of the World, the Earth herself, revered by all, is sometimes known to tremble, O Master of Koshala! The sun and moon, the eyes of the world, the very symbols of virtue by whom all things are ordered, suffer eclipse. Those great beings, the Gods themselves, are subject to fate, O Lion among Men; how much more man? It is said that even Indra and the Gods endure vicissitudes; it doth not behove thee, therefore, to lament.

"Even should Vaidehi be dead or carried away, O Raghava, it is not worthy of thee to yield to despair like a common man. Thine equals are never moved even in the greatest perils but look on all with equanimity, O Kakutstha!

"O Thou Best of Men, after due consideration, discriminate between that which is good and that which is evil; persons of right wisdom are ever cognizant of what is right or wrong. Owing to the element of uncertainty, one cannot at once distinguish the advantage or disadvantage of a deed, but if one fails to act the desired result will not take place. Thus hast thou often instructed me, O Hero, and who is able to teach thee anything? Not even Brihaspati himself. Even the Gods are powerless to fix the limit of thy wisdom, O Thou of Mighty Intellect.

"I would fain arouse the power that sorrow has quenched in thee! Having reflected on the strength of the Gods, of men and of thyself, O Lion of the Ikshwakus, prepare to overcome thine enemies! Of what use were it for thee to destroy the world, O Thou Best of Men? Seek out thy perfidious adversary and put an end to his life!"

CHAPTER 67

Rama encounters Jatayu

At these apposite words, full of wisdom, uttered by his younger brother Lakshmana, Raghava, regaining possession of himself, rallied his courage anew. Controlling his wrath, the long-armed Rama, leaning on his marvellous bow, said to Lakshmana :—" O My Friend, what should be done ? Whither shall we go, O Lakshmana ? How shall we find Sita again ? Let us consider these things carefully."

To these anxious enquiries, Lakshmana answered :—" It is for thee to search Janasthana which is inhabited by innumerable titans and covered with trees and creepers of every kind. There, inaccessible cliffs, chasms and caves are to be found and dark caverns inhabited by herds of wild beasts, the retreat of Kinneras and the resort of Gandharvas ; with me explore these places. As the mountains are not affected by tempest, neither can adversity daunt the wise such as thou, O Lion among Men."

Thus speaking, Lakshmana began to scour the forest, and Rama, still chafing under adversity, advanced holding his bow on which was strung a formidable steel-pointed shaft, when suddenly he beheld Jatayu, that excellent King of Birds, resembling a mountain peak, lying on the earth covered with blood. Seeing that great vulture, like unto the crest of a mountain, Rama said to Lakshmana :—

" Without doubt, here is the titan, who, ranging the forest under the guise of a vulture, has destroyed Sita, the Princess of Videha ! Having satisfied himself by devouring that large-eyed princess, he is resting at ease ; I shall pierce him with my dread and fiery shafts that fly straight to their target."

Speaking thus, Rama, fixing a sharp arrow on his bow, ran towards him and in his ire it seemed he would destroy the earth, whose boundaries are the sea.

Vomiting blood, that bird then addressed Rama the son of Dasaratha, in the mournful accents of one about to die, saying :—

" O Thou of long life, that divinity whom thou seekest in the great forest, as one does a healing herb,[1] has been borne away by Ravana, as has my life also.

" O Raghava, in the absence of Lakshmana and thyself, that princess was seen by me, being dragged away by the all-powerful Ravana. Flying to the aid of Sita, O Lord, Ravana was thrown to the earth by me in the struggle that ensued, and his chariot and canopy shattered. With a stroke of my wing, I slew the charioteer, but being at the end of my strength, my two wings were severed by Ravana's sword, and he, seizing hold of Sita, the Princess of Videha, escaped into the air. That titan has left me here to die ; do not slay me, O Prince."

Receiving these precious tidings concerning Sita, Rama, dropping his great bow, embraced the King of the Vultures, and then, despite his resolve, fell to the ground overcome with grief and began to lament with Lakshmana. Seeing Jatayu alone in that perilous and isolated pathway, moaning unceasingly, Rama, overwhelmed with pity, said to Saumitri :—

" The loss of my kingdom, exile to the forest, the abduction of Sita and the death of this Twice-born, renders my fate such that it would consume fire itself. Even were the sea filled to the brim and I to enter it this day, that Lord of the Rivers would dry up on account of my misfortunes.

" Such is the adversity that encompasses me that there is none in all the worlds amongst animate and inanimate beings who is so wretched as I ! On account of mine evil karma, this childhood friend of my sire, the mighty King of the Vultures, lies dying on the earth ! "

Repeating these words again and again to Lakshmana who accompanied him, Rama began to caress Jatayu, passing his hand lovingly over the body of his father's friend. Thereafter taking the King of the Vultures, whose wings were severed and who was bathed in blood, in his arms, he said :—

" Where has Maithili gone, who is dearer to me than life ? " and having spoken thus, Raghava sank down on the earth.

[1] Lit : Oshadi or Oshadi Prastha ' the place of medicinal herbs '.

CHAPTER 68

Jatayu's Death

IN the presence of the vulture, whom the terrible Ravana had struck down, Rama, full of compassion for all, addressed the son of Saumitri in these words :—

" This bird, who sought to defend my interests, has been mortally wounded in the struggle with the titan and for my sake now lies dying here. Its vital breaths are barely perceptible, O Lakshmana, its eyes are dim and it is unable to speak.

" O Jatayu, if it be possible for thee, then say what has become of Sita and how thou hast come to this sorry pass. For what reason has Ravana carried away my dear one ? How did that radiant and enchanting face, resembling the moon, appear at that time, O Best of the Twice-born. What words did Sita utter at that moment ? What is the strength, the appearance and the karma of that titan ? Where does he dwell, O Friend, answer me ! "

Beholding Rama lamenting like an orphan, the virtuous Jatayu answered in feeble accents :—

" Sita has been carried away by that Indra of Titans, Ravana, that evil wretch who resorts to the aid of sorcery and is able to loose the wind and the tempest. O Dear Child, I being exhausted, that Prowler of the Night severed my two wings and, thereafter taking hold of Sita, fled in a southerly direction. My breathing is laboured and my sight dim, O Raghava, I see before me the golden trees with leaves formed of Ushira.[1] The hour in which Ravana bore Sita away was that in which the loser soon recovers that which is lost, ' Vindya ' is its name, O Kakutstha, and Ravana was unaware of it. Like a fish that swallows the bait, he will soon perish ! Do not, therefore, despair of recovering Janaki ; thou wilt soon sport with her, having slain Ravana in battle ! "

While the vulture was thus replying to Rama, blood and morsels of flesh flowed from his beak and, on the verge of death, retaining his consciousness, Jatayu added :—" Ravana is

[1] Ushira—A hair-like grass said to grow on the trees in hell.

the son of Vishravas and the brother of Vishravana!" and thereafter yielded up his life.

"Speak! Speak further!" cried Rama, addressing him with joined palms, but the life-breaths, withdrawn from that vulture's body, were already dissipated. Thereupon the King of the Vultures fell on the earth, his legs, body and head stretched out and, beholding that bird resembling a mountain of vast proportions, that bird of reddened eyes, deprived of life, Rama, staggering under the weight of his misfortune, said to Saumitri in bitter tones :—

"Passing many years happily in the forest, the resort of titans, this bird has at length given up his life! Having lived innumerable years, he now lies here inanimate! None can withstand the course of destiny! Behold, O Lakshmana, this vulture who died in my service having sought to protect Sita, and who has been slain by Ravana of superior power. He renounced the dominion bequeathed to him by his ancestors and sacrificed his life for my sake. Undoubtedly the virtuous practise courage, devotion and the fulfilment of duty, even in the animal kingdom, O Saumitri! I did not feel so keen a grief for Sita's abduction as for the death of this vulture, who has sacrificed himself for me, O Scourger of Thy Foes!

"I hold this King of Birds in the same veneration as I did the illustrious and fortunate monarch, Dasaratha, O Saumitri! Do thou bring fuel that I may ignite the pyre of that King of Vultures, who died for me. Placing the body of that protector of the realm of winged creatures on the funeral pile, who has been destroyed by the cruel titan, I shall cremate it. O King of the Vultures, O Magnanimous Being, cremated and blessed by me, depart, and ascend to those regions, further than which it is not possible to go and which are the abode of those who habitually offer sacrifice, those heroes who never retreat on the battle field and those who distribute land in charity."

With these words, the virtuous Rama placed the King of Winged Creatures on the funeral pyre and, full of grief, ignited the flame as if performing the rite for his own kinsman.

Thereafter, the illustrious Rama, accompanied by Saumitri, entered the forest and, killing a few fat Rohi deer, strewed the

flesh on the green grass as an oblation to that bird. Tearing off the flesh of those deer and kneading it into balls, he offered it to the vulture in that pleasant forest land, placing it on fresh grass. Thereafter, in order that Jatayu might soon reach the celestial abode, he recited those sacred formulas uttered by the brahmins, after which the two princes repaired to the Godaveri river to offer water in honour of the kingly bird. Following the traditional rites, those two Descendants of Raghu bathed and performed the Udaka[1] ceremony for the King of the Vultures, who, having fallen on the field of battle, had executed a glorious and difficult deed and now, blessed by Rama, had attained to the place prepared for him in the realm of the saints.

Thereupon those two princes, after offering the last rites in honour of that excellent bird, as if to their sire, entered the forest, their minds set on the recovery of Sita, like Vishnu and Vasava, the Sovereigns of the Gods.

CHAPTER 69

Rama and Lakshmana meet Ayomukhi and Kabandha

HAVING performed the purificatory rites in honour of Jatayu, the two princes entered the forest in quest of Sita, proceeding in a south-westerly direction. Armed with sword, bow and arrow, those offshoots of the House of Ikshwaku followed a hitherto untrodden path, overgrown with bushes, trees and creepers of various kinds, which was difficult of access, with dense thickets on either side and of sinister appearance; nevertheless the two mighty warriors pressed on through that vast and dangerous wood.

Having traversed Janasthana and covered a further three leagues, those brothers, endowed with great energy, penetrated into the thick woodlands of the Krauncha Forest, which resembled a group of clouds and presented a smiling aspect

[1] Udaka Ceremony—ritual presentation of water to the ancestors.

with its many brilliant flowers and the herds of wild deer and flocks of birds that inhabited it.

After exploring this forest, anxious to behold the Princess of Videha once more, sometimes halting to bewail her disappearance, the two brothers resumed their journey, and covering a distance of three leagues came to the hermitage of Matanga.

Having searched the whole forest filled with fearful beasts and birds and planted with innumerable trees and dense thickets, the two sons of Dasaratha beheld a cave in the mountain, deep as the region under the earth where eternal darkness reigns.

Then those two Lions among Men, approaching that cave, perceived the vast shape of a female titan of hideous appearance. Fearful of aspect, she was an object of terror to weaker creatures with her loathsome countenance, vast stomach, sharp teeth, immense stature and harsh voice.

This monster subsisted on the flesh of ferocious beasts and now appeared before Rama and Lakshmana, her hair dishevelled, and addressed them, saying :—

" Come let us pass the time in dalliance together." Thereafter she laid hold of Lakshmana, who had preceded his brother and added:—

" I am named Ayomukhi, I am thine ; do thou become my lord, O Hero ! Let us give ourselves up to a long life of pleasure on the summits of the mountains and among the islands in the rivers."

Hearing these words, the Slayer of his Foes, Lakshmana, full of wrath, drew his sword and cut off her ears, nose and breasts. Her ears and nose being severed, that terrible titan ran away with all speed, and when she had disappeared, the two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, Scourgers of their Foes, hastily pressed on and entered the dense forest.

Thereafter the mighty Lakshmana, full of loyalty, charm and nobility, addressed his resplendent brother with joined palms, saying :—

" I am conscious of a violent throbbing in my left arm and my mind is filled with apprehension, whilst on every side I perceive inauspicious omens ; do thou therefore hold thyself in readiness, O Great One, and follow my counsel ; these

different portents foretell imminent danger. The Vanchulaka bird is emitting fearful cries which indicate a speedy victory for us."

Thereupon the two brothers courageously began to explore the entire forest, when a terrible clamour arose appearing to rend the trees; such was the uproar that it seemed as though a mighty wind had suddenly swept through the forest.

Seeking to ascertain the cause of this disturbance, Rama, armed with a sword, bow in hand, advancing with his younger brother, beheld a titan of vast proportions, possessing huge thighs, standing before him. Headless, his mouth in his belly, covered with bristling hairs, in stature equal to a mountain, his complexion that of a dark cloud, terrible to look upon, his voice resounded like thunder.

Shining like a lit torch, he seemed to emit sparks; his single eye, furnished with yellow lids opening in his breast, was strange and hideous and this monster, possessed of enormous teeth, was licking his lips. Despite their ferocity and size, he fed on bears, lions, deer and birds, catching them with his great arms at a distance of four miles. With his hands he seized hold of flocks of birds and herds of deer, which he put into his mouth.

Having observed them a mile off, he obstructed the progress of the two brothers and stood awaiting them. That colossal, hideous and dreadful creature of sinister aspect, with his trunk and vast arms, fearful to behold, stretching out, seized the two valiant brothers and gripped them with all his strength.

On account of his coolness and courage, the valiant Raghava remained unmoved, but Lakshmana, being a mere stripling and volatile by nature, began to tremble, and that younger brother of Raghava said to him:—

"O Hero, behold how I have fallen into the power of this titan; do thou leave me as an offering to the evil forces and go thy way happily; thou wilt soon be re-united with Vaidehi, this is my firm conviction! O Kakutstha, when thou hast regained the kingdom of thy forbears and art installed on the throne, remember me!"

At these words, uttered by Lakshmana, the son of Sumitra, Rama answered:—"Have no fear, O Valiant One, persons of thy valour are never perturbed."

Meanwhile the headless titan, of huge arms, the foremost among the giants, said to them :—

"Who are you, whose shoulders resemble a bull's, armed with great swords and bows ? It is fortunate indeed for me that by chance you have come within my range in this dangerous place. Say for what reason you have come here, where I wait ravaged by hunger, ye who are armed with arrows, bows and swords and resemble bulls with pointed horns ? Having approached me, your death is imminent."

Hearing the words of the wicked Kabandha, Rama, his face growing pale, said to Lakshmana :—

"We have fallen from one danger into a greater one, O Hero ; this ill chance may cost us our lives without our being able to rejoin our beloved Sita. The power of destiny over all beings is inexorable, O Lakshmana ! See, O Lion among Men, how ill-fortune drives us to the last extremity ; there is nothing that weighs so heavily on man as destiny. Even the brave, the mighty, the great and skilful warriors on the field of battle, overtaken by destiny, are swept away like banks of sand."

Thus spoke that heroic and illustrious son of Dasaratha, filled with distress, his eyes fixed on Saumitri, while in his soul his composure was fully established.

CHAPTER 70

Rama and Lakshmana sever the Arms of Kabandha

SEEING the two brothers fallen into his arms as if into a snare, Kabandha said to them :—

"What ails you, O Foremost among Warriors ? Since I am tormented with hunger, fate has destined you for my food and for this reason has deprived you of your wits."

Hearing these words Lakshmana, though sore distressed, determined to display his valour and addressed Rama in words worthy of the occasion, saying :—

"We shall soon become the food of this vile demon, who with his vast and powerful arms subdues all beings; let us with our swords sever his arms with all speed, O Lord, or he will make an end of us. It is shameful for warriors to make away with those who cannot defend themselves like an animal deprived of its freedom that is led to sacrifice."

These words infuriated the demon, who opened his terrible mouth wide, preparing to devour them, whereupon the two brothers, choosing a favourable moment, as if in sport cut off his two arms at the shoulders, Rama cutting the right and Lakshmana with a vigorous stroke of his sword, the left. Thereupon Kabandha, his vast arms severed, emitting loud shrieks which resounded through the earth and sky like thunder, fell upon the ground. Beholding his two arms severed and the blood flowing in streams, the unfortunate demon enquired of those two warriors in feeble accents:—"Who are you?"

Thus accosted, the supremely courageous Lakshmana began to extol the virtues of Kakutstha, saying:—

"This is Rama, the descendant of the House of Ikshwaku, known throughout the earth, and I am his younger brother, Lakshmana. Deprived of his kingdom by the Queen Kaikeyi, Raghava was exiled to the great forest, where he lived with his consort and myself. While this hero, mighty as a God, dwelt in that pastoral retreat, a titan bore away his consort, in search of whom we have come hither.

"And thou, who art thou, wandering in these woods emitting flames, thy thighs sunk into thy body?"

On hearing Lakshmana, Kabandha, calling Indra's words to mind, answered joyfully:—

"Welcome to you, O Tigers among Men, beholding you is my salvation; for my good, you have cut off my arms. Do you hear, how, due to mine arrogance, I came to assume this monstrous shape. O Illustrious Ones, I shall relate all to you truthfully."

CHAPTER 71

Kabandha tells his Story

"O LONG-ARMED RAMA, formerly I was filled with unimaginable energy and courage; my beauty was famed throughout the Three Worlds and equal to the sun, the moon and Indra himself. Assuming a terrible form, I became an object of fear to all and struck terror into the hearts of the ascetics living in the forest.

"O Rama, on a certain occasion I incurred the wrath of a great Rishi named Sthulashira, whom I tormented in this loathsome shape, whilst he was gathering wild fruits. Fixing his gaze on me, he pronounced a terrible curse, saying:—'Do thou retain for ever this fearful form, assumed by thee in order to harm others!'

"Appealing to that provoked ascetic to rescind his curse, he took compassion on me and said: 'When Rama cremates thee in the lonely forest, having severed both thine arms, thou shalt regain thy great and wonderful form.'

"O Lakshmana, know that I am really the son of Danu, who was extremely handsome to look upon; my present appearance is due to a curse pronounced by Indra on the field of battle.

"By rigorous penances I gained the goodwill of Brahma, and he granted me the boon of longevity. Thereafter I was filled with pride and, thinking 'What can Indra do to me now', I challenged him to combat, whereupon he hurled his mace of a hundred edges at me. By the force of this weapon, my thighs and head were thrust into my body; I prayed to him to end my life, but he, saying: 'May the words of Brahma prove true', compelled me to go on living. Then I addressed Mahendra, saying:—'How shall I live without food, since thou hast thrust my head and thighs into my body?'

"Thereat, Indra caused my arms to extend over four miles and placed a mouth with sharp teeth in my belly. Ever since, stretching out my arms, I wander in the forest and seize hold of lions, tigers and deer and put them into my mouth. Then Indra said to me : 'When Rama and Lakshmana cut off thine arms, thou shalt attain heaven'.

"Since then, O Great One, I have laid hold on every living being I have found in the forest and have been awaiting Rama to sever my arms ; anticipating this, I have waited for death. Now, O Lord, thou hast come, be thou blessed ! None but thou can put an end to my life ; the words of the great Rishi have proved true, O Illustrious One. I will put my counsel at thy service, O Bull among Men, and, when I have received the consecration of fire, will form a pact of friendship with you both."

At these words of Danu, Rama, in the hearing of Lakshmana, answered him, saying :—

"Ravana has borne away mine illustrious consort, Sita, whilst I and my brother were absent from the hermitage. I am conversant only with the name of that titan but not with his form, nor are we acquainted with his strength, nor where he dwells. Helpless and distressed, we wander here and there in the forest ; it behoveth thee to show thy compassion to us. After gathering all the branches that are dry and have been broken down by elephants and digging a large pit, we will cremate thee at the time indicated by thee. Do thou tell us who has carried Sita away and where she is to be found. Render us this great service, if thou art acquainted with the truth."

Thus addressed by Rama, Danu, skilled in speech, answered Raghava, saying :—"I am not possessed of divine foresight, neither am I acquainted with the Princess Sita, but being cremated by thee, resuming my natural form, I shall be able to point out one to thee, who will know what has become of her. Without being consumed by fire, I am unable to tell thee who is acquainted with that titan who has carried Sita away. Through a curse, my foresight has been destroyed, O Raghava, and through mine own fault I have become an object of loathing to the whole world, but before the sun with

his tired steeds withdraws behind the western horizon cast me into the pit, O Rama, and cremate me according to the traditional rites.

"Cremated by thee with due ceremonial, O Joy of the House of Raghu, I shall tell thee who is acquainted with that titan. It is for thee to seal a pact of friendship with him according to the law. O Raghava, that swift-footed hero will lend thee his assistance.

"For one reason or another, he has traversed the Three Worlds and there is nothing in the Universe that is not known to him."

CHAPTER 72

Kabandha tells Rama how to find Sita

AFTER Kabandha had spoken thus, those two warriors, the foremost among men, Rama and Lakshmana, sought out a hollow on the mountain-side and ignited a fire. With the aid of glowing brands, Lakshmana lit the pyre that burst into flame on every side. The vast trunk of Kabandha began to melt in the heat of the fire like a lump of butter, and later the powerful Kabandha, scattering the ashes, rose up from the pyre wearing spotless raiment and a celestial garland, and that handsome demon, his limbs covered with diverse ornaments, ascended a chariot of dazzling beauty drawn by swans, in his splendour illumining the ten regions. Thereafter, standing in the sky, he addressed Rama, saying :—

"Learn, O Raghava, by what means thou shalt be able to recover Sita. There are six expedients[1] by which misfortune

[1] Six expedients :
Sandhi—making peace.
Vigraha—engaging in war.
Yana—marching against the enemy.
Ashana—maintaining a post against the enemy.
Daidibhava—sowing dissention.
Samshraya—seeking the protection of others.

may be combated, and in the light of which all things should be considered. He who has fallen into the worst misfortune may find solace if he has someone with whom to share his lot, but thou and Lakshmana are deprived of this consolation in the calamity that has befallen you through the theft of Sita. O Rama, thou who art thyself the foremost of friends art in need of a friend. After due reflection, I see no possibility of success for thee except by this.

" Hearken, O Rama, to what I am about to tell thee. There is a monkey named Sugriva, who was banished in anger by his brother Bali, the son of Indra. This sagacious and valiant Sugriva with four of his companions inhabits the lofty mountain Rishyamuka situated on the borders of Lake Pampa.

" This Indra among Monkeys, who is full of energy and prowess, of brilliant appearance, loyal, temperate, intelligent and magnanimous, skilful, courageous, wise and powerful, has been banished by his brother for the sake of the kingdom. He will surely prove thy friend and assist thee in thy search for Sita. O Rama, do not be disturbed on this account; that which is destined must come to pass. O Lion among the Ikshwakus, fate is inexorable!

" Do thou go hence with all speed, O Valiant Raghava, and seek out the powerful Sugriva. Without delay conclude an alliance with him and, swearing mutual loyalty in the presence of fire, unite thyself with that beneficent being. Thou shouldst not disregard that King of the Monkey Tribe, Sugriva, who is of a grateful disposition, able to change his form at will and worthy of thy friendship. Thou too wilt be able to accomplish his designs, but benefited by thee or no, he will execute thy purpose.

" This son of Riksharajas' consort and of Bhaskara, wanders about restlessly on the borders of Lake Pampa and is at war with Bali. Laying aside thy weapons, seek out the retreat of that monkey on the Rishyamuka Mountain without delay and enter into a bond of friendship with that inhabitant of the forest. That Foremost of Monkeys is conversant with all the haunts of the flesh-eating titans in the world and has thoroughly explored their retreats; there is nothing on this earth that is not known to him, O Raghava.

"As long as the many-rayed sun continues to shine, O Scourge of Thy Foes, he with his companions will search the rivers, the crags, the inaccessible mountains and the caves for thy consort. He will send out his monkeys of vast stature to scour every region in order to find Sita, separation from whom has rent thine heart. He will seek for Maithili of lovely limbs even in Ravana's own abode. Should thine irreproachable and beloved Sita have been taken to the summit of Mount Meru or abandoned in the nethermost hell, that Lion among the Monkey Tribe, having slain the titans, will restore her to thee."

CHAPTER 73

Kabandha's Counsel to Rama

HAVING revealed the way to recover Sita, the resourceful Kabandha counselled Rama in the following significant words, saying :—

"This is the path leading westwards to the Mount Rishyamuka, O Rama, abounding in blossoming trees ; Jambu, Priyala, Panasa, Nyagrodha, Plaksha, Tinduka, Ashwattha, Karnikara, Cuta, Naga, Tilaka, Naktamala, Nilashoka, Kadamba, Karavira, Agnimukha, Ashoka, Raktachanda, Paribhadraka and many other trees grow there and, climbing or bending them by force, they should be used by you to sustain yourselves on the way with their sweet fruits.

"Passing through these flowery woodlands, O Kakutstha, thou wilt reach others resembling the Nandana Gardens, where, as with the northern Kurus, the trees bear fruit and produce honey in every month of the year and every season is represented simultaneously as in the forest of Chaitaratha. There, great trees with mighty branches, bowed under the weight of their fruit, resemble towering clouds on the mountain side. Lakshmana will climb those trees with ease or pull them down to offer thee the fruit equal in taste to the Nectar of Immortality. Ranging over those lovely mountains, wandering from hill to hill and wood to wood, O Hero, ye shall reach the lake Pampa covered with lotuses, free from boulders and

gravel, whose level banks present no crevice and therefore no danger of falling. O Rama, its bed is sandy and it is covered with floating lilies; swans, ducks, herons and ospreys are heard calling sweetly on the waters of that lake; nor do they fear man, O Raghava, since none has ever hunted there. Do ye feed on these birds, fat as butter, O Rama, as well as on Rohita, Chakratunda and Nala.

"O Rama, the devoted Lakshmana will offer thee diverse and excellent fish, devoid of scale or fin, plump, possessing a single bone, which may be speared with arrows and roasted on the fire. And when thou hast feasted, Lakshmana, drawing pure water, fragrant with the scent of lotuses, fresh, limpid, sparkling like silver, shall offer it to thee on a lotus leaf.

"In the evening, ranging here and there, Lakshmana will point out to thee the great monkeys who dwell in the woods and in the hollows of the hills, and thou shalt see those wild and savage apes, roaring like bulls, coming to the borders of the lake to drink.

"Wandering abroad at dusk, thy grief will be assuaged on beholding the flowering trees and the auspicious waters of the lake, and thou shalt see the blossoming Tilaka and Naktamala trees with the red and white full-blown lotuses, which will dispel thy sorrow. No man has ever gathered those blooms nor do the garlands made of them ever fade away, O Raghava, for the disciples of the great ascetic Matanga lived there, who, proficient in penance, laden with the wild fruits they had collected for their Guru, covered the earth with drops of their perspiration from which these flowers have sprung; by virtue of their austerities these blooms never die.

"Those ascetics have now passed away but there still liveth one who served them, a mendicant woman named Shabari. O Kakutstha, she, who is ever fixed in her duty, is now extremely old and, on beholding thee who art honoured by the whole world, will ascend to heaven.

"O Rama, having reached the western bank of Lake Pampa, thou shalt see a lovely, isolated and concealed spot, which is Matanga's hermitage. There, in fear of his divine authority, no elephant dare enter, though there be many. This place is known as the Matanga Wood, O Raghava, and there, O Joy

of the House of Raghu, where every variety of bird sings and which resembles the Garden of Nandana or a celestial grove, thou wilt be able to rest.

"The Rishyamuka mountain, covered with flowering trees and filled with birds, rises opposite Lake Pampa and is difficult of access, young elephants barring the way. This lofty mountain was formerly created by Brahma and a virtuous man who sleeps on its summit and dreams of treasure will find wealth on waking, whereas an evil-doer who attempts to scale it will be seized by demons while yet asleep. There too, the trumpeting of the young elephants who disport themselves in the Lake Pampa can be heard. O Rama, in that part of the hermitage where Matanga lodged them, wild elephants of vast size, streaming with crimson ichor, rush to the lake, full of ardour, like great clouds; there they slake their thirst in the cool waters, that are limpid, pleasant and extremely auspicious to those who bathe in them and which exhale a sweet fragrance. Having disported themselves, these elephants re-enter the thickets with the bears, panthers and wolves. Beholding them, as also the deer of gentle countenance resembling sapphire, who are harmless and do not fear man, thy grief will be assuaged.

"O Kakutstha, on this mountain, hewn out of the rock is a great cavern, difficult of access, covered on all sides with delightful fruits, and at the entrance is a great lake of cool water filled with every kind of reptile; there the virtuous Sugriva and his companions dwell, though sometimes he resides on the summit of the hill."

Having thus instructed the two princes, Rama and Lakshmana, Kabandha, resembling the sun in brilliance, wreathed in garlands, illumined the heavens with his splendour. Thereupon those two heroes, seeing that blessed One stationed in the sky, spoke unto him, saying :—" Go in peace ! " whereto Kabandha answered saying :—" Do ye proceed, ye will achieve your purpose ! "

Then Kabandha, having regained his pristine beauty, shining in grace and splendour, fixed his gaze on Rama and spoke again from the sky, saying :—" Enter into an alliance with Sugriva."

CHAPTER 74

Rama visits Shabari

THE two princes, following the instructions of Kabandha, proceeded along the path to the west leading to Lake Pampa. Wending their way, desirous of finding Sugriva, they gazed on the many trees laden with flowers and fruit, tasting of nectar, growing on the mountain-sides. Passing the night on a plateau, those two Descendants of Raghu reached the western bank of the Pampa abounding in lotuses and beheld Shabari's pleasant retreat.

Approaching that charming hermitage, shaded on all sides by innumerable trees, they beheld that perfected One who, seeing them, rose up and with joined palms touched the feet of Rama and the prudent Lakshmana and, according to tradition, offered water to rinse their mouths and bathe their feet.

Thereupon Rama addressed that female ascetic, fixed in her spiritual duty, and said :—" Hast thou overcome all obstacles to asceticism, O Thou of gentle speech ? Do thine austerities increase daily ? Hast thou subdued thine anger and thy need for food ? O Solitary One, hast thou observed thy vows and attained inner tranquillity ? Has thine attendance on thy Guru borne fruit ? "

Thus interrogated by Rama, the virtuous Shabari, revered by the Gods, extremely aged, standing before him, offered him homage and said :—

" Blessed by thy presence, I have acquired perfection and my asceticism is crowned. To-day my birth has borne fruit and the service of my Gurus has been fully honoured. To-day my pious practices have found fulfilment. O Foremost of Men, Greatest of the Celestials, worshipping thee, I shall attain the heavenly realm. O Gentle One, O Slayer of thy Foes, O Thou who dost confer honour on men, purified by thy compassionate regard, I shall, by thy favour, attain the imperishable worlds, O Subduer of Thy Foes.

" When thou didst set foot on the Mount Chittrakuta, those ascetics I served, ascending celestial cars of incomparable splendour, departed to heaven and those great sages, conversant with virtue, said to me :—

" ' Rama will visit thy holy retreat ; do thou receive him and Lakshmana with traditional hospitality. On beholding him, thou shalt attain the highest sphere from whence none returneth.'

" O Foremost of Men, thus did those blessed ascetics address me, and for thee I have gathered the wild fruits of diverse kinds that grow on the borders of Lake Pampa."

Hearing these words, Raghava said to her, who had not been left in ignorance by her Gurus concerning the past and the future:—

" I have heard the truth about the greatness of thy Gurus from Danu and now I would fain witness it with mine own eyes, if thou judgest it fitting."

Listening to these words falling from Rama's own lips, Shabari, guiding the two brothers to the vast forest, addressed them, saying :—

" O Raghunanda, behold this forest resembling a dark cloud, filled with birds and beasts, known as the Matanga Wood. Here my Gurus of pure soul sacrificed unto fire, their persons consecrated by mantras through which they had purified them, thus consecrating the forest and rendering it a holy place. Here too is the altar facing the west, where, with hands trembling with fatigue, my worshipful preceptors offered flowers to their Gods. O Foremost of the Raghus, behold this altar of incomparable beauty, which, through the power of their penances, still sheds its lustre illumining the four regions. Behold also the Seven Seas, drawn here by virtue of their thought, since, through fasting and the weight of years, they were unable to walk. These robes of bark, left hanging on the trees by them at the completion of their ablutions, are still wet and the lotuses of azure hue offered by them in worship have not faded.

" Now thou hast seen the forest and hast heard all that thou didst desire to know ; I will abandon my body so that I may approach those pure-souled ascetics whom I used to wait upon, to whom this hermitage belongs and whose servant I am."

Hearing these pious words, Rama, who was accompanied by Lakshmana, experienced great delight and exclaimed: "Wonderful it is!" Thereafter, addressing Shabari of ascetic practices, he said:—

"O Holy One, I have been fully honoured by thee; now repair whither thou wilt and be happy."

Having received permission from Rama to depart, Shabari, wearing matted locks, robes of bark and a black antelope skin, cast herself into the fire, thereafter rising into the air like a bright flame.

Adorned with celestial ornaments, wreathed in garlands, emitting a divine fragrance, sprinkled with sandal-paste and clad in celestial raiment, she appeared exquisite and illumined the heavens like a flash of lightning. By virtue of her meditations she ascended to those sacred abodes where her spiritual preceptors, those high-souled ascetics, dwelt.

CHAPTER 75

Rama reaches the Lake Pampa

WHEN Shabari had ascended to heaven through the merit of her spiritual prowess, Rama with his brother Lakshmana began to ponder over the pious influence of those great ascetics and, reflecting within himself on the divine authority of those holy men, Raghava said to his brother:—

"O Friend, I have now visited the retreat of those magnanimous sages of miraculous deeds, where deer and tigers roam, together with birds of every kind. O Lakshmana, we have performed our ablutions in the sacred waters of these seven seas and have offered oblations to our ancestors. Our evil karma has thereby been destroyed and prosperity made manifest; my heart is filled with peace. Methinks, O Lion among Men, that we shall soon meet with good fortune. Come, let us walk towards the enchanting Lake Pampa! The Rishyamuka Mountain may be seen in the distance; it is

there that the four great monkeys with Sugriva, Surya's son, dwell in constant fear of Bali. I am impatient to see this Lion of the Monkey Tribe, Sugriva, for it is he who will ascertain where Sita can be found."

Thus did the heroic Rama speak, and Saumitri answered him, saying :—

" Let us repair thither without delay ; my heart too reaches out to that place." Thereupon, issuing from Matanga's hermitage, the mighty Rama, Lord of Men, accompanied by Lakshmana, proceeded towards lake Pampa.

On every side he saw innumerable trees in full flower and pools where small white cranes nested in the reeds, and peacocks, lapwings and woodpeckers, filling the forest with their cries, as also a multitude of other birds.

Enjoying the trees of varying fragrance and the many ponds, Rama, transported with delight, approached one whose waters, delicious to the taste, were drawn from the Matanga lake. There the two Descendants of Raghu stood in quiet recollection. Thereafter, grief once more invading the heart of Raghu, the son of Dasaratha, he entered the enchanting lake covered with lotuses.

Adorned on all sides with Tilaka, Ashoka, Punnaga, Vakula and Uddalaka trees, which were nourished by its waters, it was framed in charming groves and its waves, pure as crystal, on which hibiscus blooms floated, flowed over fine sand. Fish and turtle abounded there and the banks were embellished by trees intertwined with friendly creepers. Kinneras, Uragas, Gandharvas, Yakshas and Rakshasas frequented it and diverse trees and shrubs cast their shade over it. That lake was verily a jewel with its fresh and limpid waters, its lotuses and water-lilies lending it a coppery sheen, whilst clumps of nymphoae cast silvery reflections and the blue of sapphire was added by other flowers. Aravinda and Utpala blooms abounded round the lake, which was covered with innumerable lotuses, whilst groves of mango in flower lent their shade, and peacocks filled it with their cries.

Rama, the mighty son of Dasaratha, who was accompanied by Lakshmana, seeing the Lake Pampa adorned like a bride with Tilaka, Bijapura, Vata, Lodhra, Sukladruma, Karavira,

Punnaga in flower, bushes of Malati and Kunda, Bandira, Nichula, Ashoka, Saptaparna, Ketaka, Atimukta and diverse other trees of varying perfume, gave expression to his grief :—

" There stands on the right bank the mountain Rishyamuka, abounding in various metals and famed for the variety of its trees and flowers, spoken of by Kabandha, where the son of the magnanimous Riksharajas, the valiant Sugriva, dwells. ' O Foremost of Men, seek out the King of the Monkeys ', were his words."

Thereafter, Rama spoke to Lakshmana again, saying :—

" O Lakshmana, how will Sita be able to live without me ? "

Having spoken thus to Lakshmana, the foremost of the Raghus, tormented by his love, which precluded him from thinking of aught else, entered the marvellous Lake Pampa, having given voice to his sorrow.

Proceeding slowly, observing the forest, Rama, coming to Lake Pampa, surrounded on all sides with enchanting groves, filled with a multitude of birds, entered its waters with Lakshmana.

END OF ARANYA KANDA

BOOK IV.

KISHKINDHA KANDA

CHAPTER I

Rama describes the Spring and the Sentiments it evokes in him

DIRECTING his steps towards Lake Pampa, which was covered with lotuses of various kinds, Rama, who was accompanied by Lakshmana, his mind troubled, began to lament. Beholding that lake, his heart was filled with delight, and under the sway of love, he said to the son of Sumitra :—

" O Lakshmana, how beautiful is the Lake Pampa with its pure and limpid waves, its lotuses and flowering water-lilies, its many kinds of trees. Oh ! How delightful ! O Saumitri, observe the Pampa Woods, how pleasant they are to look upon, those magnificent trees resembling crested mountains. I am overwhelmed and stricken with grief on recollecting Bharata's distress and the abduction of Sita.

" Though my heart is heavy, yet the Pampa lake is still able to charm me, with its ravishing woods luxuriant with every kind of blossom and its fresh and delicious waters. The month of flowering lotuses[1] lends it an extreme beauty ; serpents and wild animals frequent it, whilst deer and birds abound. The thick grass, of a deep emerald hue, is sprinkled with different flowers that have fallen from the trees and resembles a bright carpet. On every side the tops of the trees, bending under the weight of their blossom, are wholly hidden by the creepers with their flowering fronds.

" O Lakshmana, it is the season of auspicious breezes and tender love, the fragrant spring month when flowers and fruit are brought to birth on the trees. See how lovely are these flowering woods, O Saumitri, showering down a rain of petals, like water from the clouds.

" In the enchanting valleys on the escarpments, innumerable trees, shaken by the wind, scatter their blossom on the earth. O Lakshmana, see how the breeze, agitating the myriad branches

[1] Lit. Padmas, Utpalas, Jhashas.

of the flowering trees, seems to play with the blossom that has fallen or is still on the trees. The God of the Wind frolics to the accompaniment of the humming of bees and to the song of the amorous nightingale, desiring, as it were, to make the trees dance. Emerging from the mountain caves, the wind gives forth a kind of music, shaking the trees violently from side to side, causing the extreme tips of their branches to meet, uniting them one with the other. The zephyr with soft caressing breath, diffusing the perfume of sandalwood, dispels all fatigue.

"Agitated by the wind, these trees seem to add their voices to the humming of the bees amidst the soft and fragrant groves.

"On the enchanting mountain plateaus, the crags, whose points touch, resplendent with large trees bearing beautiful flowers, sparkle with beauty, and the trees, tossed by the airy currents that stir them, their crests covered with blossom and crowned with bees, seem about to break into song.

"See, on every side, the marvellous blossoming of the golden Karnikara trees, resembling men robed in silk! This season of Spring, O Lakshmana, with its choir of birds of every kind revives the pain caused by Sita's absence. In this overwhelming grief, pangs of love torment me. The gay trilling of the cuckoo tantalizes me; the joyful Datyuhaka bird that sings from the waterfalls of the forest increases my pain, O Lakshmana! Formerly when she heard its voice in our hermitage, my beloved, intoxicated with love and happiness, would call to me.

"See how the birds of varied plumage, giving forth every kind of note, seek refuge on all sides amongst the trees, bushes and creepers! The females accompanied by the males flock together according to their kind and rejoice; intoxicated by the Bhringaraja's exultant cries, they chirrup melodiously. Here, in the home of Sita, the assembled birds are made merry by the joyous song of the Datyuhaka responding to the cuckoo's call.

"The rustling of the trees rekindles the fire of my love, of which the bunches of the Ashoka blooms are the fuel, the humming of the bees the crackling, and the buds the golden tongues of flame.

"This fire of Spring is consuming me! Nay, far from that lady of lovely eyelashes, beautiful looks and gentle speech, I cannot survive, O Saumitri! The season that brings delight to the woods is the time she loved, and beyond all, she was enamoured of the forest echoing to the call of the cuckoo on every side, O Irreproachable Hero!

"The tender feelings I bear for my sweet One and the delights of Spring that increase them are a burning fire that will soon consume me utterly. I shall not live long separated from my spouse; the beauty of these trees increases the pangs of my love. Being unable to see Sita any more intensifies my anguish, whilst the presence of Spring causes the sweat of desire to break forth on me. Thinking of that lady, whose eyes resemble a doe's, grief holds me in thrall; the cruel Spring breeze from the woods tortures me, O Saumitri!

"Here and there, peacocks dance, spreading their brilliant wings in the breeze, and their tails, decorated with eyes, resemble crystal lattices. The females surrounding them are intoxicated with desire and this strengthens the love with which I am filled.

"See, O Lakshmana, on the mountain plateau, how the peacock dances and how the peahen, her heart intoxicated with joy, closely follows him! He spreads his radiant wings and his cries seem to mock my pain, for in the forest his loved one has not been carried away by a titan and he can dance in these enchanting groves with his tender love. In this month of flowers, in Sita's absence, my stay here is unendurable!

"See, O Lakshmana, love is found even among lower animals! At this moment, the peahen is ardently attracted to the steps of the male; even thus would the large-eyed daughter of Janaka follow my steps with renewed love, had she not been borne away.

"O Lakshmana, the flowers that bear down the forest branches with their weight in the autumn will produce no fruit for me and, though so lovely, will fall rotting to the ground with their swarms of bees.

"The birds at this time, in joyous flight, carolling in love, seem to call to one another, invoking deep transports of desire in me. If the Spring also reigns where my loved one, Sita,

dwells, who has now fallen under the sway of another, she will be sharing my ardour. Yet if the Spring has not reached that place where she is, how will that dark-eyed lady be able to go on living in my absenec? If this season has not come to where my gentle love resides, what will that fair-limbed lady do, who has been overpowered by a mighty adversary? My youthful and beloved consort, whose eyes resemble lotus petals and who is gentle of speech, will certainly yield up her life at the first breath of Spring. In my heart, I feel assured that the gentle Sita will not be able to survive separation from me. Devotion to Vaidehi invades my entire being and my love is wholly centred on her.

"When I remember my gentle love, this caressing breeze, so fresh and cool, carrying the fragrance of flowers, is like a burning fire to me. The God of the Wind, who was ever welcome when Sita was present, is to-day a source of pain to me. In her absence, that bird flying through the air emitting cries, the crow now perching on a tree, makes a delightful sound.[1] This winged creature will prove a messenger and bring my remembrance to the mind of the large-eyed Vaidehi.

"Listen, O Lakshmana, to the birds' intoxicating chorus of love, as they warble in the flowery crested trees. That bee suddenly flying towards the young green shoots of the Tilaka tree, blown by the breeze, is like a lover trembling with desire. The Ashoka tree, that increases the torment of lovers, rises with its plumes of flowers waving in the wind, to tantalize me. Look, O Lakshmana, at the flowering mango trees, resembling those who are distracted by the pangs of love!

"O Saumitri, O Lion among Men! See how amidst the magnificent range of trees that grow on the borders of Lake Pampa, the Kinneras wander about on every side! Observe those Nalina flowers of subtle scent, O Lakshmana, gleaming on the water like unto the sun about to rise. See the calm surface of the Pampa Lake, fragrant with lotus and blue water-lilies, frequented by swans and waterfowl, and the stamens of the lotus flowers, bright as the dawn, that the bees have scattered on the waves.

[1] This refers to a crow cawing at the time of Rama's wedding, indicating that he would shortly be separated from her; now the sound signifies reunion is near.

"How the Lake Pampa sparkles! Waterfowl abound there in every season; how wonderful are its woodland glades! It is enchanting with its herds of elephants and deer, that love to come and bathe in it. The water-lilies rocking on the breast of the limpid waves, the waters whipped by the impetuous wind sparkle with beauty, O Lakshmana.

"Far from Vaidehi, whose eyes are as large as the petals of of the lotus, who ever loved the water-lilies, life has no attraction for me. O Perfidious Kama, now I am no longer able to rejoin her, thou seekest to evoke in me the memory of that sweet lady, whose speech was a thousand times sweeter still; it were possible to bear the love I feel for her, if the Spring with its flowers and trees did not increase my torment! Those things that enchanted me, when I was with her, in her absence, have no further charm for me. On seeing the petals of the lotus cup, I say to myself: 'These resemble Sita's eyes', O Lakshmana. The fragrant breeze, blowing through the stamens of the lotus flowers and the trees, resembles her breath.

"O Saumitri, see how marvellous is the brilliance of the flowering trunk of the Karnikara on the ridges of the mountain to the right of Lake Pampa. Those ravishing trees with their flowers, stripped of leaves, seem to set the mountain ridges on fire; whilst those growing on the banks of the lake, that irrigates them, give off a delicate perfume.

"Malatis, Mallikas, Karaviras and Padmas in flower, Ketaki, Sinduvara and Vasanti trees, Matulinga, Purna and Kunda bushes on every side; Shiribilva, Madhuka, Vanjula, Bakula, Champaka, Tilaka, Nagavriksha, Padmaka, Ashoka with their azure flowers, Lodhra, Simhakesara, Pinjara trees are seen everywhere. Ankola, Kuranta, Shurnaka, Paribhadraka, Cuta, Patali, Kovidara, Mucukunda and Arjuna trees spread their blossom on the slope of the mountain. Raktakurava, Ketaka, Uddalaka, Shirisha, Shingshapa, Dhava, Shalmali, Kingshuka, Kurubaka with its red flowers, Tinisha, Naktamala, Candaka, Syandana, Hintala, Tilaka and Nagavriksha, these blossoming trees are entwined with flowering spiked creepers.

"See, O Saumitri, how they crowd together on the banks of Lake Pampa, their branches waving in the wind; the creepers

seem to be pursuing each other, resembling lovely women at play.

"The breeze passes through the trees from crag to crag, from wood to wood. Amongst them, some are in full flower and give off a soft fragrance, others, covered with buds, have a sombre air. What sweetness! How pleasant! What blossom!

"Amidst these trees on the borders of Lake Pampa, the bees seem to be resting in the heart of the flowers, staying a moment, then flying off again, quickly alighting elsewhere, greedy for nectar.

"The fortunate earth is heaped with masses of blossom that has fallen on the ground, resembling the covering of a couch. On the mountain sides unrolls a brilliant carpet of gold and red flowers of every kind, O Saumitri. At the end of winter all these trees are now in full flower, O Lakshmana. In this month of blossom, the plants open, vying with each other, and the trees, where the six-legged insects hum, seem to challenge one another, manifesting a great brilliance, their branches crowned with flowers.

"The Karandava bird plunging into the limpid waves, disporting itself with its mate, seems in some way to inspire love. Like that of the Mandakini, the beauty of the Lake Pampa is enchanting; its perfections are famed throughout the world and, in proximity, ravish the heart.

"If I might find my gentle Love once again, and we could take up our abode here, I should not even covet Indra's realm or regret Ayodhya. Here, on these charming slopes, I should sport with her and neither my thoughts nor desires would lead me away.

"In the absence of my beloved, the trees of these woods, wholly covered with every kind of flower, almost deprive me of my reason.

"Gaze on this lake of limpid waters, O Saumitri, which is covered with lotuses, frequented by the Chakravaka bird, the abode of Karandavas, abounding in pelicans, herons and wild beasts and re-echoing to the warbling of birds; verily Lake Pampa is a paradise! The myriad birds with their delightful antics and the memory of that youthful woman, my beloved, whose face shines like the moon, whose eyes resemble lotuses,

all inflame my desire. I, who am separated from Sita, whose eyes resemble the doe's and the gazelle's, on seeing them disporting themselves there, am troubled, as it were.

" On that pleasant hillside, filled with flocks of birds, intoxicated with love, might I but see my gentle One, I should be content. O Saumitri, I should certainly live anew if Sita of slender waist were inhaling the auspicious air of Lake Pampa at my side. Fortunate is he, O Lakshmana, who drinks that pleasant air from the woods of Lake Pampa that carries the fragrance of the lotus and dispels all grief.

" How is that youthful woman, whose eyes resemble lotus petals, the beloved daughter of Janaka, able to bear the existence of a slave? What shall I say to that virtuous king, the faithful Janaka, when, in the presence of the people, he asks me if all is well with Sita?

" She who followed me to the dreary forest whither my father had banished me, that Sita, fixed in her duty, where is she, my beloved, now? Separated from her, how, in mine adversity, O Lakshmana, shall I be able to endure life? I am losing my reason! When shall I hear the incomparable voice of Vaidehi again? Though she found nought but misfortune in the forest, yet that youthful woman, in her tenderness, conversed sweetly with me, who was consumed with love, as if she had ceased to be unhappy and was full of joy. How shall I, in Ayodhya, reply to Kaushalya, O Prince, when that venerable queen asks me: ' Where is my daughter-in-law and what has befallen her?'

" O Lakshmana, return and seek out Bharata, our devoted brother; as for me, I can no longer continue living without the daughter of Janaka."

Thus did the magnanimous Rama lament, as if deprived of support, and his brother, Lakshmana, in judicious and measured words, answered him, saying:—" O Rama, summon up thy courage and be happy, do not grieve, O Thou, the Best of Men. Those in thy condition have nothing with which to reproach themselves and should not give way to despair. Calling to remembrance the grief caused by separation from that being who is dear to thee, banish all excessive attachment. In proximity to intense heat, even a damp net catches fire. Though

he descend into hell or yet lower, Ravana will in no way survive his deed, O Beloved Rama. Let us first seek out this wicked demon; either he shall yield up Sita or he is lost. Should Ravana descend into the womb of Diti[1] with Sita, I shall slay him if he does not restore her to thee. Return to thy normal state, My Noble Friend, and throw off these mournful thoughts. Assuredly no success is gained by those who abandon their undertakings without making due efforts. Exertion is a powerful weapon, O Lord, there is no power superior to it. With effort, nothing is impossible in this world. Resolute men do not fail in their pursuits. By our efforts alone we shall recover Janaki. Do not permit thyself to be dominated by thy love or thy grief; cast it behind thee. Hast thou perchance forgotten the greatness of thy soul, the fixity of thy purpose and character?"

Thus spurred on by Lakshmana, Rama, who had allowed himself to be overcome by sorrow, banished his grief and distraction and regained his valour.

Calm and brave beyond imagining, Rama crossed the Pampa that was full of charm, enchanting with its trees of waving branches. When he had explored the whole forest with its waterfalls and ravines, the magnanimous Rama, agitated and overcome with grief, set out with Lakshmana, and with the joyous gait of an elephant intoxicated with Mada juice, the intrepid and magnanimous Saumitri, with rapid strides went on his way serenely, consoling Rama by his fidelity and valour.

As they neared the vicinity of Rishyamuka, the King of the Monkeys observed those heroes of unusual aspect and, despite his courage, trembled but made no move towards them. That magnanimous monkey, who walked with the dignity of an elephant, seeing those two brothers advancing, was filled with extreme apprehension and became distracted with fear.

In their terror at the sight of Rama and Lakshmana, those monkeys concealed themselves in that pleasant solitude, the refuge of the Deer of the Trees.[2]

[1] The bowels of the earth.

[2] Monkeys.

CHAPTER 2

Sugriva sends Hanuman to interview Rama

BEHOLDING those two illustrious brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, bearing great swords in their hands, Sugriva grew anxious and, with a beating heart, glancing round on every side, could find no place in which to take refuge. Seeing those two heroes, he moved about restlessly from place to place and, in his terror, felt himself about to swoon. Exceedingly perturbed, the virtuous Sugriva with his companions began to ponder on the varying aspects of the situation and that Chief of the Monkey Tribe, pointing out those two warriors, Rama and Lakshmana, to his ministers, said :—

" Without doubt, Bali has sent these two heroes to this wood, which is inaccessible to him, and they, assuming robes of bark, have come hither and have penetrated this stronghold."

Then those counsellors of Sugriva, perceiving the two skilful archers, sped away from that ridge to a higher crest, slipping off hurriedly behind their leader and thereafter they encircled that King of the Forest Dwellers. In close formation, they leapt from crag to crag, causing the rocks to tremble with their bounds. Jumping with extreme force, they broke down the flowering trees growing in that altitude and those amazing monkeys, leaping in every direction on that great mountain, struck terror in the hearts of the deer, the wild cats and the tigers.

Thereafter, the counsellors of Sugriva, assembling on that Indra of mountains, gathered round their sovereign with joined palms, and the eloquent Hanuman addressed Sugriva, who in his terror suspected some project of his brother's to be afoot, saying :—

" Let all banish fear of Bali ! There is nothing to inspire terror on this, the highest of mountains. I do not see any sign here of that cruel Bali of evil aspect, who has filled thee

with apprehension and caused thy flight, O Bull among Monkeys. That cunning creature whom thou fearest, thy wicked elder brother, is not here, O Friend: I see no cause for thine apprehension. It is evident, O Plavamgama, that thy simian nature is asserting itself, since, by giving way to distraction of mind, thou art not able to see clearly. Thou art intelligent, experienced, able to read the expression of others and fully prepared for any eventuality, but a prince who gives way to agitation is not able to forestall any."

Hearing Hanuman's pregnant utterance, Sugriva answered him with greater calm saying :—

" Seeing those two long-armed warriors of large eyes, armed with bows and swords, resembling the offspring of the Gods, who would not be afraid ? I deem these two powerful heroes to be the messengers of Bali. Kings have many friends, and I do not feel able to trust them. Those who are cautious invariably find the weak spot in those who are over-confident. Bali is crafty in every enterprise. Those monarchs who are well-informed are able to overcome their enemies and should spy out their actions with the help of ordinary men.

" Go, O Plavamgama, in the guise of a common man and find out the intentions of these two strangers. Study their gestures, their manners and their speech; observe their attitude and how they are disposed.

" By praise and repeated courtesies inspire them with confidence. Interrogate those two archers in my name, O Bull amongst Monkeys, and enquire of them for what reason they have come to these woods. Discover if their purpose be honest, O Plavamgama; their speech and manner will betray them if they are ill-intentioned."

Thus commanded by Sugriva, the Son of Maruta prepared to seek out Rama and Lakshmana.

His master, through extreme fear, having rendered himself unapproachable, the monkey Hanuman of noble attributes, listening to his words with respect, answered: " Be it so ! " and went forth to meet the mighty Rama and Lakshmana who accompanied him.

CHAPTER 3

Hanuman's Meeting with Rama

At the command of the magnanimous Sugriva, Hanuman, with one bound, left the Mountain Rishyamuka and placed himself in the path of the two Raghavas.

Discarding his monkey form, Hanuman, the son of Maruta, by the power of illusion, assumed the guise of a wandering monk and, in gentle and pleasing tones, addressed those two brothers with humility, paying obeisance to them.

Approaching those two heroes, that Foremost of Monkeys praised them as they deserved, offering them every courtesy and in accord with Sugriva's wish spoke graciously to them, saying :—

" O Ascetics of renowned penance, who are full of faith and valour and who resemble the Rishis and the Gods, why have you come to this region, sowing fear amongst the herds of deer and other denizens of the forest, surveying the trees on every side that grow on the borders of Pampa, that lake of sparkling waves, the splendour of which you enhance with your radiance, O Heroes of Great Daring ?

" O Valiant Strangers, who are you, whose skin gleams like gold and who are clad in robes of bark, possessing strong arms, you who are sighing deeply and whose sight inspires fear in all beings ? You have the air of lions or warriors who are full of courage and heroism, armed as you are with bows, resembling Indra's, the Destroyers of your Foes ?

" Full of majesty and beauty, mighty as great bulls, your arms resembling the trunks of elephants, radiant, the first among men, youthful, illumining the king of the mountains with your effulgence, you who are worthy of ruling kingdoms and like unto the Gods, what purpose brings you here ? O Heroes, whose eyes are as large as lotus petals, who wear your matted locks coiled like crowns on your heads, who resemble each

other, have you come hither from the celestial region? Verily the sun and moon have descended to earth of their own free will. O Broad-chested Warriors, ye who are men, yet have the aspect of divine beings, whose shoulders are like unto a lion's, who are endowed with great strength and resemble two bulls intoxicated with desire, whose large and massive arms look like clubs that should be adorned with every kind of ornament, yet bear none, it seems that you are both worthy of ruling the whole earth, whose decorations are the Vindhya and Meru mountains with their lakes and forests. How beautiful are your two shining bows, glistening with perfumed paste, covered with gold and shining like the mace of Indra; the two quivers also, filled with sharp death-dealing and formidable arrows resembling hissing snakes; your two swords of immense length and size, encrusted with fine gold that gleam like serpents that have just cast their slough! But why do ye not answer me?

" Sugriva is the name of that virtuous King of the Monkeys, that hero banished by his brother, who roams the earth in great distress. I have come here under the orders of that magnanimous one, the Chief of the Great Monkeys. The illustrious Sugriva desires your friendship. Know me to be his minister, a monkey, the son of Pavana, ranging where I please and coming here under the guise of a wandering monk from the Rishyamuka Mountain in order to please him."

Having addressed those two heroes, Rama and Lakshmana, in discreet and courteous terms, Hanuman fell silent and hearing that speech, the blessed Rama, delighted, addressed Lakshmana who stood beside him, saying:—

" This is the minister of the King of the Monkeys, the magnanimous Sugriva, whom I seek. O Saumitri, answer Sugriva's counsellor who is eloquent and warm-hearted and the subduer of his foes in courteous terms. Only one versed in the Rig-Veda and, who is conversant with the Yajur and the Sama Vedas, would speak thus. He has studied grammar thoroughly, and though he has spoken at length, it has been void of error. I see naught to offend, either in his mouth, his eyes, his brow, limbs, or attitude. His speech is neither lacking in fulness, depth, assurance or distinction; his voice

issues from his breast in clear modulated tones. He expresses himself with admirable felicity without any hesitation; his tone is harmonious and moves the heart agreeably. What foe, having drawn his sword, would not be disarmed by the charm of that voice that enunciates each syllable so perfectly. O Irreproachable Prince, the king who employs messengers gifted with such talent is certain to succeed in all his undertakings, since they are enhanced at the very outset, by such eloquence."

On this, Saumitri addressed that eloquent minister of Sugriva's in well-chosen words, saying:—"O Sage, we have been told of the great attributes of Sugriva and are at this moment looking for that King of the Monkeys. That which he commands we will carry out on thine instructions, O Excellent Hanuman."

When he heard this gracious speech, that monkey, born of Pavana, who wished nothing more than that Sugriva should triumph, resolved to bring about a friendly alliance between Rama and his master.

CHAPTER 4

Hanuman bears Rama and Lakshmana into the presence of Sugriva

LISTENING to Lakshmana's courteous words and marking the feeling of goodwill towards his master, Hanuman, deeming Rama would be willing to assist him, joyfully reflected that Sugriva's triumph was already assured.

He thought: "Undoubtedly the magnanimous Sugriva will not fail to regain his kingdom, for here is one who will enable him to accomplish his design."

Then the wholly delighted and eloquent Hanuman, the Foremost of Monkeys, said to Rama:—"What brings thee with thy younger brother to this perilous and inaccessible forest?"

On this enquiry, Lakshmana, prompted by his brother, related the history of Rama, the son of Dasaratha, to him.

"There was a king named Dasaratha, who was illustrious, fixed in his duty and, according to the law, the protector of the four castes. Without a foe, he himself hating none, he appeared to all living beings to be a second Brahma.

"The firstborn son of Dasaratha, who possessed every excellent quality, the refuge of all, endowed with royal virtues and of great majesty, was banished from his dominion and obedient to the behests of his sire, has come to dwell in the forest. Submitting to the paternal decree, he was followed by his consort, Sita, as the glorious sun by the sunset glow at evening.

"My name is Lakshmana. I, who am inferior to him in every respect, am his brother and accompany him as his servant. This dutiful prince, who is ever mindful of what should be done, is extremely learned and this hero, who spends his life in promoting the welfare of all beings, who is worthy of happiness and honour, deprived of supreme power, passes his days in the forest. A titan, who was able to change his form at will, carried off his consort, she being alone, and her abductor is unknown to us.

"The son of Diti, Danu, who, through a curse, had been forced to assume the form of a titan, imparted the name of Sugriva, the King of the Monkeys, to us. Now I have answered thine enquiries fully in all sincerity; Rama and I both seek the help of Sugriva. The distributor of all wealth, he, who has reached the peak of glory and was formerly the guardian of the worlds, has come to seek Sugriva's protection. The son of that instructor of his people, who was devoted to his duty, of whom Sita was the daughter-in-law, Rama, seeks the protection of Sugriva. The strong defender of the whole universe, that was formerly his highway, my Guru Rama, whom thou seest here, has come to seek refuge with Sugriva. He, under whose compassion all beings rest, Rama, has come to appeal to the goodwill of that King of the Monkeys. It is the eldest son of King Dasaratha, who was endowed with every good attribute and on this earth constantly showered honours on monarchs, Rama, renowned in the Three Worlds, who now seeks refuge in Sugriva, Lord of the Monkeys. Rama, a victim to grief, overwhelmed with affliction, has come

as a suppliant! It is for Sugriva with the leaders of the monkey tribes to show favour to him."

Hearing Lakshmana, uttering this appeal, his tears flowing the while, Hanuman graciously replied :—

" Such suppliants, endowed with wisdom, who have mastered their anger and other passions and whose fortune has led them to his presence, are worthy to be brought before that Indra of Monkeys. He too is exiled from his kingdom and the object of his brother's enmity, who has carried off his consort and, after maltreating him cruelly, forced him to flee trembling to the forest. That offspring of Surya, Sugriva, will form a pact of friendship with you, and I shall accompany him in his search for Sita."

Having spoken thus in a gentle and kindly tone, Hanuman said to Raghava in friendly accents :—" Let us seek out Sugriva."

At these words, the righteous Lakshmana bowed courteously to him and addressed the virtuous Raghava, saying :—

" What this monkey, born of the Wind-God, has gladly told us, his master will carry out; it is here that thy purpose will find fulfilment, O Rama. Goodness is painted on his countenance; he speaks cheerfully and his words ring true."

Then that extremely intelligent son of Maruta, Hanuman, went away, taking the two heroes, the descendants of Raghu, with him. Abandoning the guise of a mendicant and assuming the form of a monkey, that great ape, taking those two warriors on his shoulders, departed.

Thereafter, that intelligent son of Pavana, who was renowned among the monkeys and endowed with great prowess, delighted to have accomplished his design, scaled the mountain with immense bounds taking Rama and Lakshmana with him.

CHAPTER 5

The Alliance of Rama and Sugriva

FROM the Rishyamuka mountain, Hanuman bounded to the Mt. Malaya and presenting the two valiant descendants of Raghu to Sugriva, said :—

"This is Rama, O Great and Wise King, who has come here with Lakshmana, his brother; this true hero, born in the dynasty of Ikshwaku, is the son of King Dasaratha.

"Fixed in his duty, he is carrying out the behests of his sire, that great king who, gratifying the Deity of Fire, Agni, with the Rajasuya and Ashwamedha sacrifices, at those times distributed hundreds and thousands of cows in charity.

"On account of a woman, his son, Rama, who is present here, was exiled to the forest and, while that magnanimous hero was dwelling there, practising asceticism, Ravana carried off his consort; he now seeks thy protection.

"These two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, solicit thy friendship; do thou receive these heroes, worthy of homage, with honour!"

Hearing these words of Hanuman, Sugriva, the King of the Monkeys, who had now become easy of access, said to Rama:—

"This is a great fortune and the greatest of gains for me O Lord, that thou desirest to ally thyself in friendship with me, who am one of the Monkey Tribe. Should that friendship find favour with thee, then here is my hand, take it into thine and let us bind ourselves fast with a vow."

Hearing Sugriva's sweet words, Rama with a joyful heart clasped his hand and, happy in the thought of the alliance they were about to conclude, embraced him warmly.

Then Hanuman, the Subduer of his Foes, who had put off his monk's guise, assuming his own shape, kindled a fire by rubbing two pieces of wood together. The fire being lit and flowers cast into it, thus preparing it, he placed it between them,[1] full of joy and devotion.

Going round it they both worshipped the fire and thus Sugriva and Rama were united in friendship. Whereupon the hearts of the monkey and Rama were merry and, gazing upon each other, they were unable to have their fill.

"Thou art now the friend of my heart in joy and pain! We are one!" Thus spoke Sugriva in his satisfaction, as also Rama, and breaking off a branch from a Sala tree adorned with leaves and covered with flowers, Sugriva laid it down as it were a carpet and with Rama sat down upon it, whilst the

[1] The fire apparently being in a brazier.

delighted Hanuman, born of Maruta, in his turn, offered Lakshmana a branch of blossoming sandalwood.

Thereafter, full of happiness, Sugriva, his eyes wide with delight, said to Rama in sweet and gentle tones :—

" Cruelly persecuted, O Rama, I came hither in great fear, my consort having been wrested from me, and, in deep distress, I took refuge in this inaccessible part of the forest, where I now dwell, my mind distracted with terror.

" My brother oppresses me and is mine enemy, O Rama, O Great Hero ; do thou deliver me from the fear which Bali inspires in me ! Act, O Kakutstha, in such a way that my courage may be restored."

At these words, the illustrious and virtuous Rama, a lover of justice, smiling, answered Sugriva, saying :—

" I know well that the fruit of friendship is mutual aid, O Great Monkey ! I shall slay that Bali, who has carried off thy consort ! These pointed shafts that thou perceivest, these arrows bright as the sun, fly straight to their target. Decorated with heron's feathers and resembling Indra's thunderbolt, skilfully wrought, their points sharpened, resembling provoked serpents, they will pierce that perverse wretch with force. To-day thou shalt see Bali fall on the earth like a cleft mountain struck by these pointed darts, resembling venomous snakes."

Encouraged by Rama's words, Sugriva, overjoyed, spoke again, saying :—" May I by thy grace, O Valiant Lion among Men, regain my consort and my kingdom. O King, do thou restrain my wicked elder brother from harming me hereafter."

At the moment when Sugriva and Rama concluded their alliance, Sita's left eye, resembling a lotus, twitched,[1] as also did that of the Indra of Monkeys, which resembled gold, and that of the titan, Ravana, which was like a flame.

[1] A foreshowing of coming events.

CHAPTER 6

Sugriva shows Rama Sita's Cloak and Jewels

IN his joy, Sugriva addressed Raghava, the delight of the House of Raghu, once again, saying: "I have learnt thine history from my servant, the best of counsellors, Hanuman, and why thou hast come to these sylvan solitudes, where thou residest with thy brother Lakshmana.

"Borne away by a titan, thy consort, Maithili, the daughter of Janaka, is grieving far from thee and the sagacious Lakshmana. That titan seeking an opportunity to do thee mischief, having slain the vulture, Jatayu, carried off thy consort, thus rendering thee unhappy. Thou shalt soon be freed from the sorrow that the abduction of thy loved one causes thee.

"Whether she is to be found in heaven or hell, I shall seek out that lady and bring her back to thee, O Conqueror of Thine Enemies! Know well, I speak truly, O Raghava. Sita is not destined to be the food of gods or titans; thy consort will prove to be a poisoned dish to them!

"Banish thy grief, I will bring thy dear one back to thee. As I surmised, it was undoubtedly Sita that I saw when that titan of cruel deeds bore her away. She was crying: 'O Rama! O Lakshmana!' in a pitiful voice and struggling in Ravana's arms, like the female of the Serpent King.

"Seeing me with my five companions standing on the summit of the mountain, she dropped her cloak and magnificent jewels, which we collected and preserved, O Rama. I will bring them to thee and thou wilt perchance be able to call them to remembrance."

On this, Rama answered Sugriva in all affection and said:—"Go quickly and bring them to me here without delay, O Friend!"

At these words, Sugriva, intent on pleasing Rama, ran in all haste to a deep cave in the mountain, and seizing the cloak and jewels, that monkey showed them to Rama, saying:—"These are they, O Raghava!"

Then Rama, taking the raiment and the sparkling jewels, found his eyes to be misty with tears, as the moon is veiled in cloud, tears that in his affection for Sita fell in torrents, and, losing his composure, he fell to the earth, sobbing: "O My Dear One!"

Pressing the precious jewels to his breast, heaving deep sighs like the furious hissing of a snake in its hole, his eyes streaming with tears, perceiving Lakshmana at his side, he began to lament bitterly, saying:—

"O Lakshmana, behold Vaidehi's cloak and jewels, which, while being carried away, she allowed to fall on the earth; without doubt, it was on this grassy slope that Sita, while being borne away, scattered her ornaments, their condition confirms it."

Hearing Rama's words, Lakshmana said:—"I do not recognize the bracelets or earrings, but I know the anklets, for I worshipped her feet alone."[1]

Then Rama said to Sugriva:—"In what place didst thou behold Vaidehi, my chaste spouse, dearer to me than life itself? What hideous titan bore her away? Where does that monster dwell, who has plunged me in this mourning? Having carried Sita away and kindled my wrath, he has forfeited his life and opened the portals of death. Say, who is this titan, who, in the forest, has by craft borne away my tender consort? O Chief of the Monkeys, to-day I shall dispatch him to the region of death."

CHAPTER 7

Sugriva consoles Rama

Thus, in his distress, did Rama speak, and the monkey, Sugriva, with joined palms, weeping, his voice shaken with sobs, answered him, saying:—

"Indeed I do not know where that wicked titan dwells, nor his strength, nor the extent of his valour, nor the tribe to which that vile monster belongs, but, O Subduer of Thy Foes, I beg thee in all sincerity to master thy grief.

[1] Implying that he never raised his eyes above her feet.

"By mine efforts, I shall succeed in restoring Maithili to thee! By slaying Ravana and his entire house and manifesting my personal courage to the uttermost, I shall act in such a way that thou wilt be happy 'ere long. Thou hast yielded to despair sufficiently, now exhibit thy native resolution! Men like thee should not give way to despondency!

"I too suffer greatly on account of separation from my consort, but I do not despair like thee, nor have I lost courage. Though but a common monkey, I do not indulge in complaint. How much less shouldst thou do so, O Magnanimous Hero, thou who art wise, valiant and illustrious!

"Thou shouldst resolutely restrain the tears that fall; it becometh thee not to lose patience, that quality that distinguishes men of nobility.

"A brave man has recourse to reason and does not allow himself to be moved either in adversity, consequent on separation from relatives, or on the loss of possessions, or at the time of death. But the man who is lacking in courage and gives way to despair inevitably succumbs to his grief, like an overloaded ship in the water.

"Bowing low before thee with joined palms, I beseech thee to summon up all thy fortitude and not yield to misery. Those who permit themselves to be overcome by grief never succeed, and their strength is decreased; do not therefore give thyself up to sorrow.

"He who is overwhelmed by despair is in danger. Banish thy sorrow, O Indra among Men, and revive thy courage; let it be fully restored! I speak to thee for thine own good, as a friend; I do not wish to instruct thee. Therefore for our friendship's sake, do not yield thyself up to grief."

Tenderly consoled by Sugriva, Rama wiped his face, which was wet with tears, with the corner of his tunic and, returning to his normal state as a result of Sugriva's words, the Lord Kakutstha, embracing him, said:—

"O Sugriva, thou dost fulfil the role of a devoted friend, that of being of service with dignity. O Friend, see how, through thy good counsel, I have become myself again. It is not easy to find such an ally, who is suffering the same adversity; therefore exert thyself to find Maithili and the cruel titan,

that perverse Ravana, and tell me frankly what I should do. Thou art a rich field that the rains have visited; everything will succeed with thee. Further, the words I recently pronounced[1] with confidence, O Tiger among Monkeys, will without doubt come to pass. Never have I uttered a falsehood, nor shall I ever do so. I swear by the truth, that what I have said will come to pass!"

Hearing the words of that King of Men, the wise leader of the valiant monkeys felt in his heart that his purpose was accomplished.

CHAPTER 8

Sugriva implores Rama to help him against Bali

GRATIFIED on hearing these words, Sugriva joyfully addressed the elder brother of Lakshmana in this wise:—

"Undoubtedly I am favoured by the Gods, since I have a virtuous friend, full of great qualities, such as thou! With thy help, O Irreproachable One, it would be possible for me even to conquer the celestial realm, how much more regain my kingdom, O Lord! I am the object of reverence to my friends and kinsmen, O Rama, since, witnessed by the sacred fire, I have formed an alliance with thee! O Descendant of the House of Raghu, thou wilt soon find me worthy of thy friendship, but it does not become me to speak of mine own good qualities. It is in great heroes such as thou, masters of themselves, that affection, like true courage, remains fixed, O Best of Well-born Men! Silver, gold and precious gems are shared amongst friends as belonging to either; rich or poor, happy or wretched, destitute or gifted with good qualities, a friend is ever a friend. Good fortune, prosperity or country, O Irreproachable Hero, are all sacrificed for the sake of a friend; only devotion to him matters."

"True indeed," replied the blessed Rama to the handsome Sugriva, in the presence of Lakshmana, who equalled Vasava in wisdom.

[1] Concerning Bali.

The following day, Sugriva, seeing Rama standing by the valiant Lakshmana, scanned the forest hurriedly and, observing a Sala tree at no great distance, covered with flowers and heavy with luxuriant foliage, in which bees were humming, tore off a magnificent leafy branch, and spreading it on the ground sat down on it with Rama.

Seeing the two thus installed, Hanuman, in his turn, breaking off a branch of a Sala tree, invited the self-effacing Lakshmana to take his place there.

Beholding Rama seated at his ease on that lofty mountain, covered with flowering Sala trees, radiating serenity like a peaceful lake, Sugriva, in his delight, in soft and gentle tones, leaning towards his friend who was manifesting extreme joy, said to him in accents trembling with emotion :—

" Harassed by my brother, my declared enemy, O Rama, fear of Bali preys on my mind. O Thou who art the refuge of the world, I am without a defender, grant me thy support ! "

Hearing these words, the illustrious and virtuous Rama, fixed in his duty, smiling, answered Sugriva, saying :—

" Administering relief is the fruit of friendship, harming others that of enmity ! This very day, I shall slay the abductor of thy consort. Here are my winged shafts and fiery arrows, O Fortunate One, whose hafts, inlaid with gold, resembling Mahendra's thunder-bolt, have come from the forest of Karttikeya and are adorned with heron's plumes. Their smooth joints and sharp points lend them the appearance of angry snakes. Thou shalt see that enemy, thy brother called Bali, tainted with evil deeds, struck down with these arrows, like a mountain crumbling into dust."

Hearing Rama's words, Sugriva, the leader of the monkey army, felt an inexpressible joy. " Excellent ! Excellent ! ", he cried. " O Rama, I have been overwhelmed with distress and thou art the refuge of the afflicted. Knowing thee to be mine ally, I have poured out my sorrow on thy breast. Having clasped thy hand in mine, witnessed by the fire, thou hast become the most valued friend of my life ; by the truth I swear it. I have taken thee as my friend and speak to thee in confidence. The misfortune that has overtaken me constantly gnaws at my heart."

Thus spoke Sugriva, his eyes brimming, his voice strangled with sobs, unable to continue. Then, stemming the stream of his tears, that flowed like a raging torrent, Sugriva, in Rama's presence, mastering himself in an instant and, stifling his sobs, wiped his beautiful eyes. Thereafter, that illustrious monkey once again addressed Raghava, saying :—

"O Rama, formerly Bali, overwhelming me with insults, banished me from the kingdom. Seizing my consort, dearer to me than life itself, he bound my friends in chains. Then that perverse wretch sought to destroy me, O Rama, and often the monkeys themselves were bribed to that end, but I slew them. Full of apprehension on seeing thee, O Rama, I did not venture to go out to meet thee, being a prey to fear and yet in dread.

"These monkeys with Hanuman as their leader are my sole companions ; it is due to them that I am still alive, though the situation is grave. These loyal monkeys surround and protect me, accompanying me on all my journeys, remaining with me wherever I decide to stay.

"O Rama, of what use is it to speak further ? My elder brother, Bali, distinguished for his cruelty, is mine adversary. If he dies, at that very moment my misfortunes will be at an end. My happiness, nay, my very life, depends on his destruction. This is the only remedy for my woes. I tell thee this while yet overcome with grief ; happy or unhappy, a friend is ever the refuge of a friend ! "

At these words, Rama enquired of Sugriva, saying :—" I wish to know the source of this hostility, tell me the cause of your mutual enmity. When the reason for thine hatred is known to me, O Monkey, I will concern myself with thy relief. I shall reflect carefully on the matter and on its strength and weakness. Great is mine indignation to learn of thine ill-treatment, my heart beats faster, as in the rainy season the river's flow is augmented. Speak with serene confidence while I string my bow, and know that when I loose my shaft to strike thine adversary, he is already slain."

Hearing the speech of the magnanimous Kakutstha, Sugriva and his counsellors were highly gratified, and with a cheerful countenance Sugriva began to relate the real cause of his enmity with Bali to the elder brother of Lakshmana.

CHAPTER 9

The Story of Bali and Mayavi

" BALI is the name of my elder brother, the Scourge of his Foes. He was ever held in great esteem by my father and mother, and I, also, loved him. When his father died, he being the elder, the ministers, who thought highly of him, installed him as King of the Monkeys. During his rule over that immense empire of his ancestors, I lived in constant subjection to him, as one of his servants. On account of a woman, a great quarrel arose between Mayavi, the illustrious elder son of Dundubhi and Bali. One night, whilst others slept, Mayavi approached the gates of Kishkindha, roaring with anger and challenged Bali to fight. Roused from deep sleep by those formidable cries, my brother, unable to contain himself, went forth immediately, advancing in fury on that powerful titan in order to kill him. His wives and I tried to restrain him and I threw myself at his feet, but he repelled us all and went forth full of valour.

"Then, out of devotion, I followed him. Seeing my brother and me following within a short distance, the titan, in fear, fled in all haste. Struck with terror he ran on, but we ran even faster. The moon, that had risen, flooded the path with its light. Hidden by grass, a large hole in the ground came into view and the titan threw himself into it precipitately. We reached the edge and halted. Bali, who was overcome with rage, his senses perturbed, said to me :—

"' O Sugriva, remain here, without leaving the mouth of the cave, while I enter in order to engage the enemy and slay him! '

"Hearing these words I besought that Destroyer of his Foes to go no further but he, under the threat of a curse, told me not to move from there and disappeared into the cavern.

"After his entry into the cave, a whole year elapsed and I remained at my post without; I imagined him to be dead and

in my affection for him was deeply distressed and a prey to fearful presentiments, reflecting: 'I shall not see my brother again.'

"Then, for a long time, blood mixed with foam flowed from the cave and the roaring of the titan reached my ears, but I did not hear the cries of triumph that my elder brother emitted in the struggle. Thereafter on account of the various signs, I went away, thinking that my brother was dead, but first I blocked up the mouth of the cave with a rock as large as a mountain. O My Friend, overcome by sorrow, I offered up the ceremonial water for my brother and returned to Kishkindha.

"Despite mine efforts to keep the matter secret, the ministers learnt of it and having taken counsel together, they installed me as sovereign. I ruled the empire with justice, O Rama. In the meantime Bali, having slain his enemy, the titan, returned. Seeing me installed with all the insignia of royalty, his eyes became red with anger and he overwhelmed me with reproaches and bound my ministers in chains.

"Having slain his adversary, my brother returned to the city, and I, paying obeisance to that great warrior, offered him the traditional homage, but he did not respond to my cordial congratulations. I touched his feet with my forehead, O Lord, but Bali in his anger refused to pardon me."

CHAPTER 10

The Origin of Bali's Hatred of Sugriva

"In my desire to make peace, I tried to placate my brother, who, returning, was incensed against me.

"I said: 'By the grace of the Gods, thou art victorious and thine enemy has fallen under thy blows; without thee, I should be bereft of support, thou art my only defender, O My Protector, My Delight! Now accept this royal canopy of many supports, resembling the full moon about to rise. Take also these chanwaras from my hands!

"'O King! For a whole year I waited sadly beside the cave and, seeing blood flowing to the entrance and stopping

there, my heart was filled with anguish and my mind deeply troubled. I then closed the opening of the cavern with a great rock and left that place to return to Kishkindha in deep distress. Seeing me, the people of that city and the ministers also placed me on the throne, without my desiring it. Therefore pardon me, thou who art our Sovereign. I was invested with royal dignity in thine absence and thus preserved the city, its ministers and inhabitants, from anarchy. This kingdom has been as a trust to me; I now render it back to thee, O Friend. Do not be wrath against me, O Destroyer of thy Foes! Placing my head at thy feet, O King, with joined palms, I appeal to thee. It was on the insistence of the ministers and the united populace, that I was placed on the throne, they reflecting that the country would be seized by an enemy in the absence of a monarch.'

"To this humble speech, Bali answered with invectives, saying:—'Cursed be thou!' and repeated the imprecation. Then, gathering his subjects and ministers together, he inveighed against me, in the midst of my friends, reproaching me with bitter words, saying:—

"'Know well, that in anger the great Titan, Mayavi, one night challenged me to a long-desired combat. Hearing his voice, I left my royal dwelling and was followed immediately by my unscrupulous brother, who is present here. In the night, seeing me followed by another, that great titan fled terrified and both of us pursued him closely. In his haste to escape, he entered a great cave, and, seeing that vast and fearful cavern, I said to my false-hearted brother: 'I cannot return to the city till I have slain my rival; do thou wait at the mouth of the pit till I have struck him down.' In the belief that he would remain there, I penetrated into that inaccessible cave.

"'While I was pursuing mine enemy, whose audacity rendered him truly formidable, a whole year elapsed, but at last I discovered him and slew him with his entire family. That titan, while being slain, roared aloud, and a stream of blood that spread all round, filled the cave, making it difficult to pass. Having happily slain my cruel adversary, I could not find the opening of the cave, the entrance having been

closed. I called Sugriva again and again but there was no response and my situation was serious. By dint of kicking, I was able to roll back the rock and emerged, after which I returned to the city. That is why I am incensed against the wicked Sugriva, whose desire for the throne overcame his brotherly affection.'

" With these words, the monkey Bali, bereft of all sense of shame, chased me from the kingdom with but a single garment, having ill-treated me and carried off my consort, O Rama. Wretched and deprived of my companions, I took refuge on this lofty mountain, Rishyamuka, to which, for a particular reason, Bali has no access. This is the whole story of the origin of our intense hostility ; I have not merited the great humiliation that has visited me, as thou now seest, O Raghava. O Thou who art the dispeller of fear, do thou take this dread of my brother from me and punish him in my name."

The virtuous prince, having heard the faithful Sugriva's narrative, smiling, answered him saying :—

" These arrows of mine, bright as the sun, never fail to reach their target and with their sharp points will strike down that evil Bali with force. As long as I do not behold this ravisher of thy consort, this wretch of perverse practices will live, but not an instant longer.

" I see thee to be plunged in an ocean of grief, as am I, and I shall aid thee to traverse it ; thou shalt certainly regain thine erstwhile prosperity."

Hearing these words, that increased his joy and courage, Sugriva, in extreme delight, uttered the following memorable words.

CHAPTER II

Sugriva tells Rama of Bali's Exploits

HAVING listened to Rama's words, which inspired him with joy and courage, Sugriva paid obeisance to him, manifesting his gratitude, and said :—" In thy wrath, undoubtedly, thou art

able to burn up the worlds with thy sharp arrows, like the fire at the end of the great cycle; yet reflect on the courage of Bali and, having heard me with attention, consider what should be done.

" 'Ere the sun rises, the indefatigable Bali strides from the western to the eastern ocean and from the northern to the southern sea. He is so powerful that he is able to break off the lofty mountain peaks, throwing them into the air and catching them again. In order to demonstrate his strength, he will snap in two innumerable trees of every kind in the forest.

" Once, there existed a giant, named Dundubhi, in the form of a buffalo, who resembled the peak of Mt. Kailasha and who was as strong as a thousand elephants. The thought of his own might intoxicated him and he was puffed up with pride on account of the boons he had received.

" That giant came to the sea, the Lord of Rivers, and approached that ocean of tumultuous waves, rich in pearls, saying :—' Let us enter into combat one with the other!' But that righteous Lord of the Waters, rising up in all his majesty, answered that titan who was driven on by destiny, saying :—' O Skilful Warrior, I am not able to take up thy challenge, but hear and I will tell thee of one who can match thee in fight.

" ' On a vast plain, the retreat of the ascetics, there lives a monarch of the mountains, named Himavat, the far-famed father-in-law of Shiva. He possesses great rivers, many ravines and waterfalls and is well able to satisfy thine overwhelming lust for combat.' Reflecting: ' The ocean holds me in dread', that foremost of titans sped to the forest of Himavat, as swift as an arrow loosed from a bow.

" Breaking off the great white cliffs, Dundubhi let them roll down, shouting with exultation. Then, like a mass of white cloud, Himavat of gentle and benign aspect, standing on the summit of the mountain, addressed that titan thus :—' Do not torment me, O Dundubhi, O Thou who delightest in justice! I am not concerned with the exploits of warriors but am a refuge of the ascetics.'

" Hearing these words of that righteous monarch of the mountains, Dundubhi, his eyes red with anger, answered :—

" 'If thou hast not the strength to fight and art paralysed with fear, then tell me who is able to match his prowess with mine, for I wish to enter into combat with him.'

" Hearing this, the wise Himavat, skilful in discourse, answered that powerful titan to whom he had spoken previously, saying :—

" 'The name of that hero of great intelligence, who dwells in Kishkindha, is Bali, the illustrious son of Shakra. That great sage is a skilful warrior and of thy stature, he is as well able to enter into combat with thee as Vasava with Namuchi. Go with all speed and seek him out, since thou art thirsting to fight; he has little patience and is ever full of martial ardour.'

" Having listened to the words of Himavat, Dundubhi in fury went to Kishkindha, Bali's city, and assuming the form of a terrible buffalo with pointed horns, resembling a thundercloud charged with rain in the sky, that powerful titan came to the gates of the capital. Causing the earth to tremble with his cries, he uprooted the trees near the entrance of the city, snapping them in two. Then, like an elephant, he burst open the gates.

" My brother, who was in the inner apartments, hearing the tumult, came out, full of impatience, surrounded by his wives, like the moon encircled with stars, and that leader of the monkeys, Bali, said to Dundubhi in clear and measured accents :—

" 'O Dundubhi, why dost thou obstruct the gateway of the city and bellow thus? I know who thou art. Have a care for thy life, O Warrior!'

" At these words of the sagacious King of the Monkeys, Dundubhi, his eyes red with anger, answered :—

" 'Do not address me thus in the presence of women, O Warrior! Accept my challenge and meet me in combat to-day, so that I can measure thy strength, though, O Monkey, I am willing to restrain my wrath for one night, to allow thee to indulge in the pleasures of love, according to thy whim, till the rising of the sun. Distribute alms, therefore, to thy monkeys and embrace them for the last time. Thou art the King of the Deer of the Trees, do thou load thy friends and

people with favours. Look long on Kishkindha; enjoy the company of thy wives, for I am about to chastise thee for thine insolence. To slay a drunken man or one who is demented or whose strength has ebbed away or who is without weapons or defence, or one, like thee, given over to lust, is considered equal to infanticide in the world.'

"Dismissing all his wives, including Tara and others, my brother, restraining his wrath, smiling, answered that chief of the titans, saying:—

"'Do not make a pretext of my being inebriated if thou art not afraid to enter into combat with me! Know that in the present issue this intoxication is the wine of warriors!'

"With these words he threw off the golden chain that his sire, Mahendra, had given him and began to fight. Seizing Dundubhi by the horns, who resembled a mountain, that elephant among monkeys roared aloud and began to assail him with blows. Thereafter Bali with a tremendous shout threw him on the ground and blood began to flow from the stricken buffalo.

"Then betwixt the two combatants, Bali and Dundubhi, mad with anger, each desirous of overcoming the other, a terrible struggle ensued. My brother fought with matchless courage, equal to Indra's, dealing blows with his fists, knees, feet and also with rocks and trees. The duel between the monkey and the titan caused the latter to weaken, whilst the strength of the former grew. In the end, Bali, lifting Dundubhi up, let him fall on the earth and in this death struggle the giant perished.

"As he fell blood flowed in rivers from the veins of his body and that titan of vast limbs lay stretched on the ground, having rejoined the elements.

"Lifting up the inanimate corpse in his two arms, Bali with one throw sent it flying to a distance of four miles. From the titan's jaws, shattered by the violence of the fall, blood spouted forth and the drops were carried by the wind to Matanga's hermitage. Seeing that rain of blood, the Sage, displeased, reflected: 'What perverse wretch has dared to spatter me with blood? Who is this evil, perfidious and vile creature, this madman?'

" Thinking thus, that excellent Muni went out of the hermitage and beheld the buffalo, as large as a mountain, lying dead on the ground. By virtue of his austerities, he knew that a monkey was responsible for this deed and he pronounced a terrible curse on that ape who had thrown the corpse there saying:—

" ' May he never come here ! If that monkey who, with a stream of blood, has desecrated this wood where I have built my retreat, ever sets foot in this place, he will die ! Should that wicked wretch who has thrown the corpse of this titan here, breaking my trees, come within four miles of my hermitage, he shall assuredly not survive and his confederates, whosoever they may be, who have sought refuge in my forest, will not be permitted to remain here following this malediction. Let them go where they will, for I shall assuredly curse any who stay in these woods, that I have protected like mine own offspring, and destroy the foliage and young shoots, plucking the fruit and scratching up the roots. From to-day, every monkey that I see here will be changed into stone for the period of a thousand years ! '

" On hearing the words of the ascetic, all the monkeys that frequented those woods went away, and, beholding them issuing from the forest, Bali enquired of them, saying :—

" ' Why have ye all come here, ye dwellers in the Matanga Forest ? Happy are they who dwell in the woods ! '

" Then those monkeys told Bali, who wore a chain of gold, the cause of their departure and also of the curse that had been laid on them.

" My brother, hearing the monkeys' words, sought out that great Rishi and with joined palms attempted to appease him, but Matanga refused to listen to him and re-entered his hermitage.

" Trembling under the shadow of that curse, Bali began to roam about aimlessly, but, terrified of the malediction, that monkey did not dare approach the great mountain Rishyamuka or even glance in that direction, O Prince.

" Knowing he will never venture here, O Rama, I wander about these woods with my companions, free of all anxiety The heaped bones of Dundubhi, the victim of the arrogance, his strength inspired in him, are here and resemble the peak

of a vast mountain. Bali in his might, stripped all the leaves from these seven giant Sala trees with their mighty boughs, one after the other. His strength is immeasurable, O Rama; I have now proved it to thee. In consequence, I do not see how thou canst overcome him in battle, O King."

Thus spoke Sugriva and Lakshmana, smiling, then enquired of him :—

" What can Rama do to convince thee that he is able to overcome him ? " Sugriva then made answer :—

" If Rama is able to penetrate these seven Sala trees, that Bali pierced again and again, with a single arrow, then, by that sign, I shall know he can overcome him. At the same time, let him with a single kick send the carcase of the buffalo flying to a distance of a hundred bows' length."

Having spoken, Sugriva, the corners of whose eyes were slightly red, reflected awhile and then once more addressed Rama, the descendant of Kakutstha, saying :—

" Full of courage and audacity, renowned for his strength and energy, that powerful monkey has never been defeated in combat. His exploits are famous; the Gods themselves are not able to accomplish them. It was on remembering them, filled with terror, that I resolved to take refuge on the Rishyamuka Mountain. Thinking of that Indra among Monkeys and how invincible, irresistible and ruthless he is, I came here. Filled with distress and anguish, I wander about in these woods with my devoted and excellent companions, Hanuman and others. Thou art for me a glorious and illustrious friend, O Thou who art dear to thy friends, O Lion among Men! I take refuge with thee as in another Himavat; yet I am conversant with the strength of my wicked brother and his overbearing nature and I am not acquainted with thy skill as a warrior, O Raghava. Assuredly, it is not that I wish to test thee or humiliate thee nor inspire thee with fear by recounting his great exploits. Mine own cowardice is well known! O Rama, thine accents, thine assurance, thy temerity and thy stature truly manifest thy great power, which is like a fire concealed beneath the ashes."

Hearing the words of the magnanimous Sugriva, Rama began to smile and answered him, saying :—

" If thou dost not trust in our courage, O Monkey, I will instil thee with that confidence so essential in war."

Then with his foot, that mighty hero sent the dried up carcase of that titan flying. Seeing the carcase hurtling through the air, Sugriva once more addressed Rama, who was as radiant as the sun, in the presence of Lakshmana and the monkeys and in candid accents said :—

" O my Friend, when that corpse was fresh and its flesh intact, it was sent flying through the air by my brother, though he was weakened by inebriation and fatigue. Now stripped of flesh, as light as a straw, thou hast kicked it in play; it is therefore impossible for me to judge who is the more powerful, thou or Bali. Between a fresh corpse and dry bones, there is a great difference, O Raghava.

" I am therefore still uncertain, My Dear Friend, as to who is the stronger, thou or Bali, but if thou art able to pierce even a single Sala tree, then I should be able to judge who is superior and who inferior. Therefore stretch that bow, which resembles the trunk of an elephant and drawing the cord up to thine ear, discharge that great arrow, which I am sure will penetrate the Sala tree and by that sign I shall be satisfied. I implore thee, O Prince, to do me this great favour. As amongst the planets the sun is greatest and among mountains the Himalayas, just as among quadrupeds the lion is king, so among men thou art supreme in valour."

CHAPTER 12

The Fight between Sugriva and Bali

HEARING Sugriva's gracious speech, Rama, in order to inspire him with confidence, took up his bow and a formidable arrow, and taking aim, pierced the Sala trees, filling the firmament with the sound.

Loosed by that mighty warrior, the arrow, decorated with gold, passed through the seven Sala trees and entering the mountain, buried itself in the earth. In the twinkling of an

eye that shaft with the speed of lightning, having pierced the seven trees with extreme velocity, returned to Rama's quiver.

Seeing those seven trees pierced by Rama's impetuous arrow, that Bull among Monkeys was extremely astonished and, overcome with joy adorned with all his ornaments, prostrated himself before Raghava with joined palms, his forehead touching the earth,

Amazed at Rama's prowess, he addressed that great warrior, skilled in the scriptural traditions, as also in the use of every weapon, who stood before him and said :—

" O Lion among Men, with thine arrows, thou art able to destroy all the Gods with their King in combat, why not Bali also ? O Kakutstha, who can resist thee on the field of battle, thou, who hast pierced seven Sala trees, the mountain and the earth with a single arrow ! Now my anxieties are dispelled and my satisfaction complete. Where could I find a friend such as thou, who art equal to Mahendra and Varuna ? For my sake do thou subdue mine adversary in the form of a brother, I implore thee ! "

Rama, embracing the handsome Sugriva, like unto Lakshmana, in his great wisdom answered him, saying :—

" Let us leave here without delay for Kishkindha. Do thou precede us. When we come to that city, O Sugriva, it is for thee to challenge Bali, who is a brother in name only."

Thereafter they started out in all haste for Kishkindha, Bali's capital. Concealing themselves behind some trees, they halted in a dense wood where Sugriva hurled defiance at Bali with a deep and challenging roar. His clothes tightly wrapped round him, he shouted with all his strength, shattering the silence of the firmament.

When the powerful Bali heard his brother emitting this tremendous clamour, he was livid with anger and rushed out like the sun rising over the mountain top. Then a terrible struggle ensued between Bali and Sugriva, resembling the clash of Mars and Jupiter, in the heavens.

With the striking of their palms like the clap of thunder and their fists that were as hard as diamonds, the two brothers, filled with fury, assaulted each other, whilst Rama, bow in hand, watched those two combatants, who resembled the Ashwins.

Not being able to distinguish between Bali and Sugriva, Rama was loath to loose his death-dealing shaft. Then Sugriva, overcome by Bali, seeing that Rama refrained from coming to his aid, ran towards the Rishyamuka Mountain. Exhausted, his limbs covered with blood, crushed by his brother's blows, who pressed him furiously, he took refuge in the vast forest. The mighty Bali, seeing him penetrating deep into the woods, said :—

" Go ! I spare thee ! " he himself not venturing to enter there, through fear of the curse.

Then Rama, accompanied by his brother and Hanuman, re-entering the wood, found the monkey Sugriva. When the latter perceived Rama returning with Lakshmana, he hung his head in shame and in a tearful voice, his eyes fixed on the ground, said :—

" After demonstrating thy strength, thou didst issue the command : ' Challenge thine adversary ! ' Thereafter thou didst allow him to defeat me. Why hast thou done this ? O Raghava, thou shouldst have told me frankly : ' I do not wish to slay Bali,' then I would not have left this place." Thus in sad and reproachful tones did the great-souled Sugriva speak, and Rama answered him, saying :—

" O Sugriva, My Dear Friend, do not vex thyself but hear the reason why I did not discharge mine arrow. Thine ornaments, clothes, shape and gestures and those of Bali so resembled each other that there was no difference between you ! The voice, colour, look, prowess and speech were wholly similar, O Monkey ! Disconcerted by thine exact resemblance, O Best of Monkeys, I did not let fly my swift and dreadful death-dealing arrow, the slayer of the foe, for this reason. ' One must have a care not to destroy them both,' I reflected. In truth, had I made an end of thine existence, O Chief of the Monkeys, through ignorance or carelessness, then my stupidity and heedlessness would have been apparent. To kill one's ally is assuredly a great and heinous sin. Further, I, Lakshmana and the fair-complexioned Sita are all wholly dependent on thee ; in the forest, thou art our refuge. Enter once more into combat, therefore, and fear nothing, O Monkey. In the twinkling of an eye, thou shalt see me piercing Bali with my

shaft and striking him down; thou shalt see him writhing on the field of battle. Do thou, however, wear a distinguishing sign, O Chief of the Monkeys, by the help of which I may recognize thee in the thick of the struggle. O Lakshmana, these blossoming and beautiful Gajapushpi flowers, do thou place round the neck of the magnanimous Sugriva."

Plucking the blossoming Gajapushpi from where it grew, Lakshmana placed it round the neck of Sugriva. The creeper that the fortunate Sugriva wore round his neck was as bright as the sun and resembled a circle of cranes illumining a cloud over which they are planing. Sparkling with beauty and encouraged by Rama's words, Sugriva started on the road to Kishkindha with him.

CHAPTER 13

The Hermitage of Saptajanas

THE virtuous elder brother of Lakshmana, together with Sugriva, left the Rishyamuka Mountain and proceeded towards Kishkindha, which was maintained by Bali's valour, Rama bearing his golden bow and carrying his arrows that shone like the sun in his hand.

Sugriva, his neck adorned with a wreath of flowers, full of courage, strode before the magnanimous Raghava and Lakshmana, behind whom came the hero Hanuman with Nala, the valiant Nila and the illustrious general Tara, renowned among the monkeys.

They observed the trees bowed with the weight of their flowers and the rivers bearing their peaceful waters to the sea. The ravines and cliffs with their chasms, caves, peaks and charming dales, the lakes with their limpid waters of emerald hue, adorned with opening lotus buds, drew their gaze as they passed. Ducks, cranes, swans, woodcock and other waterfowl were heard calling, whilst in the clearings of the woods deer could be seen grazing on the tender grass and young shoots, without fear of the wild beasts that roamed everywhere.

Wild and ferocious elephants adorned with ivory tusks, who proved a menace to the lakes by causing the banks to

crumble, wandered about here and there and intoxicated with Mada juice, striking their foreheads against the rocks, resembled moving mountains. Monkeys as large as elephants, covered with dust and every species of wild beast and bird were seen by the followers of Sugriva as they passed on their way.

Advancing thus in all haste, the Joy of the House of Raghu, Rama, seeing a grove of trees, enquired of Sugriva :—" What is this clump of trees like a cloud in the sky ? Indeed they seem like a mass of clouds ringed round by plantain groves ! Great is my curiosity concerning them, O My Friend. I wish to learn of thee what these are."

On this enquiry from Rama, Sugriva, still walking on, told him the history of that great wood. " O Rama ! It is a vast hermitage that removes all weariness and encloses many pleasant gardens and groves ; the roots, fruit and water are delicious. Under the name of Saptajanas, seven Munis of rigid vows lived there, lying in the water, their heads alone emerging from it. Every seven days they partook of food, which was the wind from the mountain on which they dwelt. After seven hundred years they ascended to heaven in their bodies. Through the power of their asceticism, this hermitage, encircled by a hedge of trees, is inaccessible even to the Gods and Asuras, as well as their leaders. The birds eschew it, as also the other beasts of the forest ; those who enter it unwittingly never return. Lovely melodies are heard issuing therefrom with the music of instruments and singing. Sometimes a divine fragrance is spread abroad from there, O Raghava, and three fires are lit ; it is their smoke that one can see from here ; the tops of the trees are enveloped in it like a golden cloud, resembling the plumage of a dove.

" These trees are magnificent with their tops crowned with smoke, like unto mountains of emerald crowned with rain clouds. Pay obeisance with reverence to them with joined palms, O Valiant Raghava, as also thy brother, Lakshmana. Those who offer salutations to those Rishis of pure soul experience naught that is grievous."

Then Raghava with his brother Lakshmana, with joined palms, offered salutations to those illustrious ascetics. Having

paid reverence to them, the virtuous Rama, his brother Lakshmana and Sugriva with his monkeys went on happily.

Having left the hermitage of Saptajanas far behind, they beheld the inaccessible Kishkindha protected by Bali. Rama, his younger brother Lakshmana and the monkeys, famed for their valour, seizing their weapons, once more prepared to slay their enemy in that city which the son of the Chief of the Gods protected by his prowess.

CHAPTER 14

Sugriva again challenges his brother to fight

RETURNING to Kishkindha, Bali's city, they all concealed themselves behind the trees in the dense forest. Glancing round on every side, the Friend of the Woods, the thick-necked Sugriva began to exhibit signs of extreme anger and, surrounded by his kinsmen, let out a loud roar, challenging his brother to fight. Shattering the firmament with his war-cry which resembled a great thundercloud propelled by a high wind, that monkey, who was endowed with a leonine gait and resembled the rising sun, stepped forth.

Looking at Rama who was skilled in combat, Sugriva said to him :—" Behold Kishkindha, surrounded by its walls made of gold and a rampart of monkeys, that is bristling with instruments of war and from which innumerable banners stream. This is Bali's citadel. Now fulfil the promise formerly made to me of slaying him, O Hero, as the blessing of Spring visits the creepers."

At Sugriva's words, the virtuous Rama, the destroyer of his foes, answered :—" Thou art wearing that which will enable me to distinguish thee, this garland of Gaja flowers, placed by Lakshmana round thy neck ! This creeper worn by thee lends thee the brilliance of the sky in which the sun is surrounded by stars, O Warrior. To-day, O Monkey, I will deliver thee from the fear and hostility that Bali inspires in thee. Point out thine adversary in the guise of a brother,

O Sugriva! Till Bali is struck down in the forest, let him make merry, for when he crosses my path, he will not return alive. If he should do so, thou wilt be justified in reproaching me for not honouring my word.

"In thy presence, seven Sala trees were transfixed by me with a single arrow; rest assured that Bali will fall to-day on the field of battle under my shafts.

"No light word has ever passed my lips, even in adversity, nor ever shall, even were it to attain my purpose; therefore banish all anxiety.

"Like a field rendered fertile by the rains of Shatakratu, do thou challenge Bali of the golden diadem. O Sugriva, raise a shout that will cause that monkey, proud of his victory, whom thou wert unable to subdue before, and who is bellicose by nature, to come forth. Those who deem themselves brave are not able to endure the war-cry of their foes, above all in the presence of women."

Hearing Rama's words, the golden-hued Sugriva let out a deafening roar, rending the skies.

Terrified by the clamour, the kine ran hither and thither, like noble women exposed to danger of hostile attack through the negligence of their loved ones, and the wild deer fled away like maddened war horses wounded in battle, whilst the birds fell to the ground like planets whose virtue is exhausted.

Then that son of Surya emitted a roar resembling thunder, confident of his strength and radiant with courage, like the ocean whose waves are lashed by a tempest.

CHAPTER 15

Tara's Advice to Bali

HIS brother Bali, who was seated amidst his wives in the inner apartments, heard the cry of the great-hearted Sugriva and was filled with wrath. When he caught the sound of that uproar, causing terror to all beings, his feelings of lust changed

to those of violent anger and, his limbs trembling with fury, he who formerly shone like gold suddenly lost his brilliance, like the sun under eclipse. Grinding his teeth, his eyes flashing with fire, he resembled a lake from which the lotuses have been uprooted. Hearing that unendurable cry, that monkey strode forth in great haste, stamping on the earth as if he wished to shatter it.

Then Tara, embracing him tenderly, once more avowed her devotion to him and, timid and troubled, addressed him in these words, the wisdom of which the future was to prove :—

" O Brave Warrior, this anger that has taken hold of thee is like a raging torrent ; do thou abandon it, as on rising in the morning thou dost throw aside a faded garland. Tomorrow at dawn, enter into combat with Sugriva, O Valiant Forest Dweller, for thou dost not yet know the strength or weakness of thine enemy. That thou shouldst set out immediately does not meet with my approval. Hear while I tell thee the reason why I seek to delay thee !

" Formerly Sugriva, in great anger, came hither and challenged thee to fight, but defeated and overwhelmed by thy blows, he fled. Having been assaulted and crushed in this wise, he now returns to challenge thee again, which rouses my suspicion. To roar thus in so insolent and arrogant a manner, so filled with wrath, is not done without a particular motive. To my mind, Sugriva has not returned alone but has an escort who is ready to rush to his defence ; hence this cry of defiance. Sugriva is a naturally clever and sagacious monkey and will never ally himself to one whose valour has not been tried. This, O Warrior, is what I have heard from the youthful Prince Angada ; take heed therefore and have a care ; it is to thine advantage ! He hath told me all that he has heard from his emissaries concerning Sugriva while journeying in the forest. Two sons were born to the King of Ayodhya, full of courage, invincible in combat ; they are of the House of Ikshwaku and are renowned ; their names are Rama and Lakshmana.

" These two indomitable heroes have sealed a pact of friendship with Sugriva, and this ally of thy brother is Rama, famed for his military exploits, the Destroyer of Enemy Hosts, who

resembles the fire at the end of the world cycle. He dwells in the forest and is the supreme refuge of all the virtuous who seek his protection. He is the support of the oppressed, the unique repository of all glory and is conversant with both secular and spiritual learning; his pleasure consists in carrying out the behests of his Sire.

"As the King of the Mountains is a treasury of precious metals, so is he a mine of every good quality. It is peace and not war that thou shouldst seek with that magnanimous One, the invincible Rama, whose prowess on the battlefield is without limit. O Hero, I have no desire to oppose thee, but tell thee this for thy good. Therefore, heed my counsel! Do not seek a quarrel with thy younger brother, O Valiant Monarch. I am certain it is to thine advantage to contract a friendship with Rama. Reconcile thyself with Sugriva and put all thoughts of hatred far from thee. Thy younger brother is an inhabitant of the forest of amiable qualities. Whether he dwell here or there, he is bound to thee from every point of view, and I do not see any like him in the world. With gifts, honours and in other ways, bind him to thyself through kindness. Abandon thine ill-will and let him in future dwell near thee. The thick-necked Sugriva is a powerful, valuable and natural ally. Win back thy brother's affection; there is no other way to happiness for thee here. If thou dost desire to please me and recognizest my devotion to thee, then in the name of affection, O My Friend, I implore thee to act as I have counselled. Follow my advice which is salutary; trust me and do not give way to anger; live in peace with the son of the King of Koshala; do not quarrel with him, his valour is equal to Indra's."

In these words, which were full of wisdom and would have enabled him to save himself, Tara addressed Bali, but he refused to listen and, driven by the force of destiny, advanced to meet his death.

CHAPTER 16

Rama inflicts a mortal Wound on Bali

THUS spoke Tara, whose face was as radiant as the moon, and Bali answered her in tones of reproach, saying:—

" When my brother, who is above all mine adversary, challenges me in anger, how shall I endure it, O Lady of Lovely Countenance ? The brave who are not accustomed to bearing insults and who never turn back in battle, O Timid One, would rather suffer death than such ignominy. I may not disregard the weak-necked Sugriva who, in his determination to enter into combat, has offered me so insolent a challenge.

" Have no anxiety on my behalf regarding Raghava, for he is conversant with dharma and pious by nature. How could he do wrong ? Return home with thy companions ! Why follow me further ? Thou hast demonstrated thy tender devotion sufficiently ! I am about to set out to fight Sugriva ; control thine emotions. I shall punish his insolence, but I shall not take his life. I shall enter into combat with him, since he desires it, and, assailed by the blows dealt with my fists and the trunks of trees, he will flee. That coward will not be able to withstand my strength and prowess. O Tara, thou hast accompanied me far enough and shown thine affection for me sufficiently, now return, and I, having obtained satisfaction from my brother on the battlefield, will follow thee; I swear it by my life and race."

Then the virtuous Tara, embracing Bali and speaking tenderly to him, weeping, circumambulated him, keeping him on her right hand, and bidding him farewell according to the tradition and reciting the sacred texts so that he might return victorious, she re-entered the inner apartments, distracted with grief.

When Tara reached the inner sanctuary with the other women, Bali, distraught with anger, went out of the city,

hissing like a great serpent. Full of ire, breathing heavily, he ran with all his strength, looking round on every side, eager to find his adversary.

At last he beheld that powerful monkey, the golden-hued Sugriva, clothed in excellent armour, full of confidence, resembling a brazier, and, seeing him inflated with pride, Bali wrapped his garments more tightly about him, a prey to extreme anger. Having thus girded up his apparel, his fists clenched, full of vigour, he advanced to meet Sugriva and engage him in combat. From his side, Sugriva, also doubling his fists in rage, went out to meet his brother who was wearing a crown of gold.

Then Bali, addressing Sugriva, whose eyes were red with anger, who was skilled in the art of fighting and was rushing towards him in fury, said :—

" With this clenched fist, its fingers tightly closed, I shall deal thee a blow that will cause thee to yield up thy life."

At these words, Sugriva, livid with anger, answered :—" It is mine that will drive the life's breath out of thee by caving in thy skull." Thereafter, violently assaulted by Bali, he hurled himself on him in fury, rivers of blood streaming from him, like a mountain from which torrents fall. Unperturbed, Sugriva, tearing up a Sala tree, struck his rival's body as lightning fells a mountain peak. Struck by the Sala tree which unnerved him, Bali resembled a heavily-laden ship, sinking with all its cargo in the waves. Endowed with terrific strength and as agile as Suparna, both fought like two formidable giants resembling the sun and moon in the sky. Each of these two destroyers of their foes sought to find the weak point of his enemy.

Bali excelled in strength and valour while the son of Surya, Sugriva, despite his great energy, was the weaker, and his courage beginning to dwindle, he ceased to boast and, enraged with his brother, made a sign to Rama.

The uprooted trees with their branches and crests, the blows from fists, knees and feet, fell thick and fast in the formidable struggle that resembled the duel between Vritra and Vasava. Covered with blood, the two monkeys, dwellers in the forest, whilst fighting resembled two thunderclouds clashing together with a great uproar.

Rama, observing Sugriva, the Prince of Monkeys, exhausted scanning the horizon without ceasing to struggle, and, seeing that he was almost overcome, selected an arrow for the purpose of slaying Bali, and that great hero stretched his bow and with that shaft, resembling a venomous serpent, held it ready, like Antaka, bearing the Wheel of Time. The twanging of the bowstring caused alarm among the birds, who flew away, as also the wild beasts who fled in terror as at the end of the world period.

Discharged by Rama with a sound like the crash of thunder, that formidable arrow of dazzling aspect pierced Bali's breast, and under its fatal impact the powerful and valiant King of the Monkeys fell to the earth, resembling Indra's banner ruthlessly thrown to the ground on the day of the full moon in the month of the constellation of Aries.

Stricken and senseless, Bali fell, his voice strangled with sobs which gradually died away. Rama, the strongest of men, discharged that formidable, fiery and death-dealing arrow, shining like gold, resembling Time itself at the end of the world, which shot forth like smoke issuing from the flaming mouth of Hara, and, streaming with blood looked like unto a blossoming Ashoka tree on the mountain-side, whereupon the Son of Vasava, like the banner of Indra that has been overthrown, fell senseless on the field of battle.

CHAPTER 17

Bali reproaches Rama

STRUCK by Rama's arrow, that doughty warrior fell to the earth, like a tree severed by an axe. With his ornaments of fine gold, his limbs paralysed, he sank to the ground, like the banner of the Chief of the Gods, its cord severed.

At the fall of the King of the Monkeys, the earth grew dark, resembling the firmament bereft of the moon. Though lying on the earth, the body of that high-souled Bali was neither robbed of its beauty nor of its life's breath, nor did his courage

fail him, for that excellent golden necklace that Indra had bestowed on him preserved the life, strength and beauty of that Lord of Monkeys. Adorned with that golden chain, the heroic Monkey Chief appeared like an evening cloud tinged with the roseate hues of dusk! His chain, his body and the arrow piercing his heart blazed in triple glory, even after he had fallen. That arrow loosed by the valiant Rama from his bow, by its virtue opening the way to heaven, brought Bali supreme deliverance.

Lying on the field of battle, like a fire without flame, he resembled Yayati cast forth from the divine realms, fallen on the earth, his merits exhausted. Like the sun that Time, at the end of the world, throws down on the earth; unapproachable like Mahendra, inaccessible as Upendra, with his golden necklace, his broad chest, his vast arms, his mouth inflamed, his glances wild, that son of a mighty king lay. And Rama followed by Lakshmana, their eyes fixed upon him, approached that warrior lying there like a naked flame about to be quenched. Full of respect for that hero, who was gazing at them, the two valiant brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, approached with slow steps.

On perceiving them, the supremely courageous Bali uttered these harsh words, that seemed both restrained and just. Stretched on the earth, almost without lustre, mortally wounded, motionless, in words pregnant with meaning he addressed that warrior proudly, saying :—

" Striking me from behind, what merit dost thou hope to earn by this, O Thou who hast inflicted a mortal wound on me, while I was engaged in combat with another ? ' The virtuous Rama is full of nobility, generosity and valour; he is compassionate, devoted to the welfare of all beings, fixed in his duty; gracious, omnipotent and conversant with the rules of conduct and austerity; these are the praises sung of thee, these are the merits attributed to thee by the whole world!

" Self-mastery, forbearance, loyalty, fixity of purpose, goodwill and heroism are the virtues of kings, O Prince, as also the repression of evil deeds. It was reflecting on these virtues, believing them to be thine, that I came to fight Sugriva. ' Whilst I am filled with rage and engaged in combat with

another, he will not attack me' was my conviction, even without knowing thee. Now I perceive that thou art a perverse creature, feigning piety whilst in truth thou art like a well concealed in the grass, without faith and resorting to evil deeds. Outwardly virtuous, wearing the cloak of integrity, thou art in reality a scoundrel, like a fire bidden by ashes, nor do I recognize thee behind the concealing mask of virtue.

" Since I have neither laid waste thy land, nor thy city and have not offered thee insult, why hast thou destroyed me —I who am guiltless and who have ever fed on fruit and roots, a monkey dwelling in the forest, who never sought to enter into combat with thee but who was engaged in fighting another ? Thou art the son of a king and inspired confidence by thy benign aspect and, what is more, thou wearest the livery of sanctity ; who of the warrior caste, conversant with what is good and evil, in the garb of a righteous man, would commit such a wicked deed ?

" Thou art born of the House of Raghu and art spoken of as virtuous, how canst thou, assuming the guise of an ascetic, wander about thus ? Equanimity of soul, liberality, forbearance, justice, loyalty, constancy and courage are the characteristics of a king, O Prince, also the meting out of punishment to the guilty.

" We live in the forest, O Rama, and are but wild beasts who feed on roots and fruits, which is natural to us ; but thou art a man, O Prince ! Land, gold and beauty are the causes of discord, but here in the woods, who will envy us fruit and roots ? In temporal and spiritual matters, as well as in the dispensing of reward and punishment, a king should be wholly given up to the task of government and not dominated by any desire for pleasure, but thou art consumed by thy desires ; irascible, restless, disregarding the royal code, thy bow is thy cherished argument ! Thou dost not pursue the path of duty nor does thine understanding concern itself with the interests of the people ; a slave to lust, thou dost permit thy senses to rule thee, O Chief of Men. In a word, Kakutstha, thou hast slain me, who never did thee any harm ! How wilt thou answer in the assembly of the virtuous, having committed this reprehensible deed ?

" The regicide, the brahmanicide, the slayer of the cow, the thief and the one who finds pleasure in the destruction of other beings, the unbeliever and the one who weds before his elder brother, all these enter hell. The informer, the miser, the one who slays his friend or defiles his Guru's bed, undoubtedly descends to the region of evil-doers!

" It is not permitted to the well-born to clothe themselves in my skin, nor may those, such as thou, partake of my flesh if they follow the tradition. There are five kinds of animals possessing five nails on each paw that may be enjoyed by the brahmin and the warrior, O Rama. They are the porcupine, the hedgehog, the deer, the hare and the tortoise. O Rama, men of worth will not touch my skin or bones nor eat my flesh.

" Alas! I disregarded Tara, who, sagacious and prudent, offered me sound counsel, but in my folly, overpowered by fate, I did not heed it. O Kakutstha, like a virtuous woman who has married a man devoid of faith, the earth is without a protector, since thou art its protector. How canst thou be born of the magnanimous Dasaratha, seeing that thou art deceitful, mischievous, evil-hearted and treacherous? Having exceeded the bounds of restraint, broken the law of the virtuous and disregarded the goad of justice, that elephant, Rama, has struck me down. Guilty of such an infamy, condemned by the wise, finding thyself in their presence, what wilt thou say?

" That valour that has been so greatly vaunted to us who are neutral, I do not see thee exercising against evil-doers! If thou hadst fought me openly, O Prince, thou wouldst now find thyself in the presence of death, having been slain by me. Thou didst overcome me by taking me unawares, as a serpent bites a sleeping man, I who was else invincible. Thou art ruled by evil. In order to gratify Sugriva, thou hast struck me down.

" If thou hadst first confided thy purpose to me, I would have brought Sita back to thee in a day. Not only this, but I should have placed that wicked ravisher of thy spouse, the titan, Ravana, in thy power, a chain round his neck, having laid him low in combat. Even if Sita had been cast into the bottom of the sea or hell itself, I should have brought her back to thee at thy command, as Vishnu recovered the scriptures that had been borne away by Hayagriva.

" Sugriva would have obtained the throne legitimately on my departure to the celestial realm, whereas now he has acquired it wrongfully, since thou hast overcome me by craft on the field of battle. As death in this world is inevitable, I hold it as naught but how wilt thou justify thy conduct towards me ? "

Thus, pierced by an arrow, his features altered, did that magnanimous son of the Monarch of Monkeys speak whilst looking on Rama, who was as radiant as the sun, after which he fell silent.

CHAPTER 18

Rama answers Bali

SUCH was the speech, dictated by a sense of duty and his own interests, full of censure and harsh in tone, that Bali, who was mortally wounded, made to Rama. Resembling the sun shorn of its rays or a parched cloud or a fire that has been extinguished, that illustrious King of the Monkeys, endowed with justice and reason, having upbraided Rama with severity, was addressed by him in the following words :—

" O Bali, why dost thou inveigh against me like a child, since thou art wholly ignorant of the traditions of duty, profit and social convention ?[1] Without consulting thine elders, who are held in respect by the brahmins, in thy simian folly thou hast presumed to address me thus, who am filled with good-will towards thee.

" This earth belongs to the Ikshwakus, together with its mountains, forests and woods and they have jurisdiction over the wild beasts, birds and men. It is ruled by the virtuous Bharata, who is fixed in his duty and fully conversant with the law, with the proper means to acquisition of wealth and the right pursuit of pleasure and who is ever engaged in repressing evil-doers and recompensing the virtuous. It is the duty of a king to develop the art of government, be established in

[1] See Glossary under *Dharma, Artha, Kama.*

virtue, be endowed with valour and know how to estimate time and place. We other princes carry out his righteous commands and range the whole earth in our desire to promote the law. When that Lion among Men, Bharata who cherishes equity, rules the entire world, who would dare to commit an injustice? Fixed in our supreme duty, obedient to Bharata's will, in accord with the law, we put down transgression. Thou hast violated justice and thy conduct is condemned by all, lust being thine only mentor, ignoring as thou dost the royal path.

"One who pursues the path of duty should regard his elder brother, the one who has given him birth and the one who instructs him in wisdom as his three fathers. Righteousness demands that a younger brother, a son and a virtuous disciple should be regarded as one's own offspring; even for the virtuous, duty is subtle and not easy to grasp, the soul residing in the heart alone knows what is right and wrong.

"O Heedless Monkey, thou art surrounded by irresponsible simian counsellors, who are unable to control themselves, thus it is a case of the blind leading the blind, how canst thou learn from them? I am speaking frankly to thee; thou hadst no possible right to reproach me in my wrath. Learn now for what reason I struck thee down.

"Thou hast acted in opposition to the spiritual law. While Sugriva yet lives, thou hast had marital relations with Ruma, who is thy sister-in-law. O Perverse Wretch, in order to satisfy thy lust, thou hast transgressed the law of righteousness and, O Monkey, since thou hast not respected thy brother's wife, this retribution has followed thee. I see no other means of restraining him who acts contrary to the interests of his subjects and does not conform to the social code but by punishment, O King of the Monkeys!

"Being a warrior of an illustrious race, I am unable to brook thy villainy. The man who makes his daughter, his sister or his sister-in-law an object of lust, is punishable by death; this is the law!

"Though Bharata is the supreme monarch, we carry out his behests. How canst thou who hast broken the law, escape punishment? He who fails to listen to his instructor in the form of the law, will be judged according to the law by the King.

"Bharata seeks to repress dissolute customs, and we who carry out his commands fully try to bring to justice those who, like thee, overstep the boundaries of the law, O Chief of the Monkeys.

"Sugriva is my friend and equal to Lakshmana; it is for the recovery of his wife and kingdom that he entered into a pact of friendship with me. In the presence of his ministers, I pledged my word; how can a man like myself fail to meet these obligations?

"For all these reasons based on the law, thou canst judge for thyself, whether thy punishment is merited or no. That it is wholly just, thou wilt be forced to admit and, further, that one is bound to help a friend if one acknowledges one's duty. Thou wouldst have done likewise if thou hadst followed the law. Two of the verses of Manu are specially devoted to these rules of conduct and are known to the authorities of the law; I have been faithful to them. 'Those men who, having done wrong, submit to the penalty imposed by the king, are washed free from every stain and ascend to heaven like the good and those who do benevolent deeds. Further punishment or pardon exonerates the thief from his fault, but the king who does not put down vice himself assumes the guilt.'

"My worthy ancestor Mandhata voluntarily underwent a terrible expiation for a monk who was guilty of an offence similar to thine whom he pardoned. Other monarchs, in their folly, have also done wrong, but have practiced penance; it is by this means that passion is subdued. But enough of recriminations! Thy death has been decreed in accordance with the spiritual law, O Lion among Monkeys; we are not acting on personal impulse.

"Listen to a further reason, O Valiant Bull among Monkeys; having grasped its significance, thou wilt no longer be able to reproach me. Neither did I follow mine own whim, nor did I act hastily, nor in anger.

"Snares, nets and traps of every kind, either open or concealed, are used to catch innumerable wild beasts, whether they be fleeing in terror, or, unafraid, are standing still. Whether these beasts are maddened with fear or no, they who feed on flesh run them through without pity while their

back is turned; it does not seem to me that they are at fault. In this world, even royal Rishis, versed in their duty, indulge in the chase. This is why, with a single arrow, I struck thee down while engaged in combat with thy brother, O Monkey. What boots it, whether thou didst enter into combat with me or no, since thou art but a monkey.

"Unquestionably it is kings who dispense the unwritten law and happiness in life, O Best of Monkeys! One should never reproach them, nor address them disrespectfully, nor disregard them; they are Gods who, assuming human form, dwell on earth! But thou in thine ignorance of the law, dominated by anger, didst insult me, who have ever conformed to the established tradition of mine ancestors."

Hearing Rama's words, Bali, deeply mortified, no longer sought to denounce the son of Raghu, the task of duty now having been rendered clear to him, and with joined palms that King of the Monkeys answered him, saying:—

"Undoubtedly, O First of Men, what thou hast uttered is truth! To gainsay an eminent personage is not permitted to one who is of common stock. It was in ignorance that I formerly addressed thee in disrespectful terms. Do not hold it against me, O Raghava, thou who art conversant with the significance and implication of things and devoted to the welfare of all. In the serenity of thine understanding, that nothing disturbs, the working out of cause and effect are known to thee. O Thou whose speech accords with justice and who art conversant with duty, rescue me who am fallen and the first of those to transgress the law."

In a voice strangled with sobs, Bali, groaning, expressed himself with laboured effort, his eyes fixed on Rama, and resembled an elephant sinking in a morass.

"I am not concerned for myself or Tara or my relatives, as much as for my virtuous son, Angada, of golden bracelets. Beholding me no more, that unfortunate one, who has been so cherished from childhood, will pine away with grief, like a pool whose waters have dried up. He is yet young and his understanding has not yet matured; he is my only son and most dear to me. Tara is his mother, O Rama; do thou protect that powerful Angada.

" Show extreme kindness to Sugriva and Angada; be their guardian and their guide, O Thou who art fully conversant with the laws of righteousness and unrighteousness. What thou wouldst perform for Bharata and Lakshmana, do for Sugriva and Angada.

" See that Sugriva does not hold the sagacious Tara responsible for the fault I have committed or fail to treat her with respect. Under thy protection, let him govern the kingdom and, living obedient to thy counsels, he will attain heaven as well as rule the earth. As for myself, despite Tara's words, I wished to receive death at thine hands and came forth to enter into a duel with my brother Sugriva."

Having spoken thus to Rama, the now humble King of the Monkeys became silent.

Then Rama consoled Bali who was still fully conscious and spoke to him in a gentle voice, expressing the essence of spiritual and secular wisdom, saying:—

" Have no anxiety either on our behalf or thine own, O Best of Monkeys. We know what should be done, above all in that which concerns thee. He who punishes the guilty and he who is guilty and pays the penalty have both fulfilled the purpose of cause and effect and therefore eschew calamity. Thus, thanks to the punishment that frees them from all taint, they regain their immaculate nature by the very path which paved the way to the penalty.

" Put away grief, bewilderment and fear with which thine heart is filled; thou canst not avoid thy fate, O Chief of the Monkeys. What Angada was to thee, O King of the Monkeys, he will be to Sugriva and myself; do not doubt it."

The magnanimous Rama, intrepid in combat, uttered these words full of tenderness and benignity, in accord with righteousness, and the dweller in the forest answered him humbly, saying:—

" Pierced by thine arrow, my mind bewildered, I insulted thee without knowing what I was doing, O Lord, Thou whose immeasurable valour is equal to Mahendra's! Be pacified and pardon me, O Veritable Sovereign of the Monkeys."

CHAPTER 19

Tara's Grief

THE mighty King of the Monkeys, who lay pierced by an arrow, did not reply further to Rama's judicious words. His limbs crushed by rocks, severly bruised by the trees that Sugriva had hurled at him, transfixed by Rama's shaft, at the point of death, he swooned away.

Tara, learning that he had been struck down by an arrow discharged by Rama in the struggle and receiving the distressing tidings that her lord lay dying, with a troubled heart hastily emerged with her son from the rocky cavern. The monkeys who followed Angada, however, on seeing Rama with his bow, ran away in fear.

Perceiving those monkeys fleeing in terror, like deer that scatter when the leader of the herd falls dead, Tara, though herself distraught, rallied the frightened monkeys, who sought to escape from Rama, as if his shafts had already been discharged at them, and said :—

" O Monkeys, you are the servants of that Lion among Monarchs ; why are you abandoning all and flying in disorder? Has Bali not been laid low by his wicked brother on account of the throne ? It was from afar that Rama loosed his far-reaching arrow ! "

Thus did the consort of Bali speak, and those monkeys, who were able to change their shape at will, answered with one voice in words fitting to the occasion, saying :—

" O Thou, who art the mother of a living son, return home and protect Angada ! Death, in the form of Rama, has struck Bali down and is bearing him away. Having launched a volley of immense trees and great rocks, Bali fell, borne down by arrows that resembled the lightning. Beholding that Lion among Monkeys overcome, him whose prowess was equal to Indra's, the whole army of monkeys has taken to flight. Let the warriors save the city and install Angada as king ! The

monkeys will obey Bali's son, who will take his place. If these conditions do not meet with thine approval, O Lady of agreeable looks, then the monkeys will seek other inaccessible retreats. Amongst those who live in the forest, some have no wives, others have common wives, but we fear those who have been deprived of their wives and still desire them."[1]

As they were but a short distance away, that Lady of Sweet Smiles heard them and answered with dignity, saying :—

" Since that Lion among Monkeys is dying, of what use to me is my son or the entire kingdom ? I shall seek out the feet of that magnanimous hero whom Rama has slain with a single arrow."

Speaking thus, overcome with grief, beating her head and breast with her two hands and weeping, in her distress she rushed towards him and, still running, beheld her lord lying on the earth, he, the slayer of the foremost of monkeys, who never turned back in battle; he, who was able to hurl great mountains, as Vasava discharges his thunderbolt with all the fury of a storm, roaring the while like a great mass of thunder, clouds; he whose valour was equal to Shakra's; that hero pierced by a single arrow, lay on the earth, like the leader of antelopes a tiger has struck down for its prey, or like a place of sacrifice, held sacred by all, with its banners and its altars laid waste by Suparna on account of a serpent.

Then Tara beheld the mighty Rama leaning on his bow, standing with his younger brother and the brother of her lord, and, beside herself with grief, she approached her spouse, who had fallen on the battlefield and, seeing him lying there, was overcome by distress and fell to the ground. Then, rising as if newly waking from sleep, seeing her lord caught in the noose of death, sobbing, she cried out: " O King ! "

Her piercing cries, resembling an osprey's, moved Sugriva deeply, as did the presence of Angada also.

[1] A reference to Sugriva.

CHAPTER 20

Her Lamentations

SEEING her lord lying on the earth, pierced by that death-dealing arrow discharged by Rama, Tara, whose face resembled the moon, approaching him, embraced him. At the sight of Bali, who lay like an elephant wounded by an arrow, that monkey resembling a huge mountain or an uprooted tree, Tara poured out her heart, torn with grief, in lamentation :—

"O Thou who wert full of valour in combat ! O Hero ! O Best of Monkeys ! It is because of my recent importunities that thou wilt not now speak to me ! Rise, O Lion among Monkeys and rest on a comfortable couch ! Those great monarchs, thine equals, do not sleep on the earth ; or is the earth thy cherished love, since even in dying thou dost lie by her and scornest me ?

"Without doubt, O Warrior, thanks to thy great exploits, thou hast founded another and more glorious Kishkindha in heaven ! The pleasures we once shared in the woods and in the fragrant bowers are henceforth at an end. I am bereft of all joy and hope and sunk in a sea of sorrow, since thou, the King of Kings, art returning to the five elements.[1] My heart must be made of stone, since, seeing thee lying on the earth, grief does not cause it to break into a thousand pieces. Thou didst steal away Sugriva's consort and sent him into exile ; it is the fruit of this double fault that thou art now expiating, O Chief of the Monkeys !

"Intent on thy welfare, I submitted to thy senseless reproaches ; I, who in the desire to be of service to thee gave thee nought but wise counsel, O Indra of Monkeys ! Now, O Proud Lord, beguiled by their youthful and seductive beauty, thou art moving the hearts of the Apsaras. It is irrevocable fate which this day has put an end to thine existence ; thou whom Sugriva could not vanquish hast resigned thyself to its power !

[1] The body being said to rejoin the elements at death.

"Having without cause struck down Bali who was engaged in combat with another, though it is censurable, Kakutstha has no regrets. I who, till now, did not know distress, deprived of thy support, at the height of misfortune, must pass my life as a widow. What will the fate of Angada be, the object of my tenderness, a valiant though youthful prince accustomed to pleasure, now at the mercy of his paternal uncle, who is filled with anger against us ? Look long on thy virtuous Sire, O My Beloved Son ! Soon thou shalt see him no more.

"And Thou, O comfort thy son, give him counsel, embracing his brow before thou departest on thy last journey ! Assuredly Rama has accomplished a great feat in striking thee down, but he is guiltless, for all he did was to obey Sugriva. O Sugriva, rejoice, regain possession of Ruma and enjoy the kingdom without hindrance ; thy brother, thine adversary, is wounded unto death.

"But Thou, O My Beloved, why dost thou not answer my complaint ? See, thy numerous and lovely wives surround thee, O King of the Monkeys."

Hearing Tara's lamentations, those unfortunate women, placing Angada in their midst, emitted pitiful cries on every side. Then Tara spoke once again, saying :—

"How canst thou abandon Angada, O Thou whose powerful arms are decorated with bracelets, and go forth on thy last journey thus ? It is not meet to abandon a son who possesses thy virtues and is aimiable and handsome. If inadvertently I have offended thee, O Long-armed Hero, then forgive me ! O Chief of the Monkey Tribe, I lay my head at thy feet."

Thus did Tara with the other queens lament bitterly at the side of her lord and that lady of matchless beauty resolved to die of hunger lying on the earth at Bali's side.

CHAPTER 21

Hanuman's Speech

HANUMAN, however, the Leader of the Monkeys, gently tried to console Tara, who was lying on the earth like a star fallen from the heavens, and said :—

" The fruits of all that is done under the impulse of virtue or vice must be plucked after death, whether they be good or evil. O Unhappy One, for whom dost thou weep ? O Unfortunate One, whom dost thou bewail ? For whose life, that bubble, should one mourn ? Henceforth the youthful Angada should be the object of thy solicitude, since he alone survives. From now on, thou shouldst concern thyself on his account and render him fitting service. Thou knowest well how uncertain is the future of all beings ; therefore it is for thee to perform noble deeds here, who art conversant with thy duty and who art a stranger to common acts !

" He under whom hundreds and thousands of monkeys lived has now reached the uttermost bourne of his destiny, and since he fulfilled the injunctions laid down by the law and was distinguished for his impartiality, his liberality and his tolerance, he now dwells among the virtuous conquerors. Why shouldst thou mourn for him ? O Irreproachable One, thou hast now become the protectress of all the leading monkeys, thy son, and also this kingdom of the apes and bears. Little by little do thou console these two (Sugriva and Angada) who are afflicted, and under thy tutelage, O Fair Lady, let Angada rule the earth.

" To ensure the future and reflect on the present is the whole duty of a prince ; it is so decreed by destiny. Angada should be installed as King of the Monkeys and be anointed. Seeing thy son seated on the throne, thy peace of mind will be restored."

Hearing these words, Tara, who was torn with grief on account of her lord, answered Hanuman, who stood at her side, saying :—

" I would rather cling to the body of this hero than a hundred sons like Angada. I am not able to govern the monkeys nor is he; such a duty devolves on his paternal uncle, Sugriva. O Hanuman, it is not for me to confer the kingdom on Angada; the true relative of the son in succession to his father is the uncle, who stands as a second father to him and not the mother, O Foremost of Monkeys. There is nought better for me in this world or in the next than to take refuge near the King of the Monkeys, my lord; it is fitting for me to share the bed of him who has fallen facing the foe."

CHAPTER 22

Bali's last Words

BALI, whose breathing was scarcely perceptible and who was sighing faintly, glanced round and discerned his younger brother, Sugriva, before him. Addressing him whose victory had assured him of the possession of the dominion of the monkeys, he spoke in clear and affectionate tones, saying :—

" O Sugriva, do not approach me with any evil intent, I who was carried away by a fatal loss of understanding. It would seem to me, O My Friend, that it was not our destiny to live at peace with one another; though friendship is natural between brothers, yet with us it has been different. To-day, thou wilt regain the kingdom of the forest-dwellers, whereas I, mark well, am leaving this world and going to the region of death. Not only am I abandoning in an instant, life, kingdom and great prosperity but also a reputation without stain. At this supreme moment, I make an appeal to thee and, difficult though it is, it must be done, O Valiant Prince.

" See, stretched on the earth, his face bathed in tears, Angada, who is worthy of happiness, brought up in luxury and, though a child, possessing nought that pertains to childhood! Do thou protect him from all peril, he who is my son and dearer to me than life, the issue of my loins and whom I now abandon, though he does not merit abandonment. Be

his father, his benefactor and his guardian in all circumstances and in danger be his refuge, as I have ever been, O Chief of the Monkeys!

"Born of Tara, that fortunate prince, thine equal in valour, shall precede thee in the destruction of the titans. That youthful Angada, Tara's son, that valiant hero, whose prowess is great, will manifest it in deeds of valour worthy of me. Further, when the daughter of Sushena (Tara), of profound discernment and conversant with future happenings, bids thee saying: 'Do this, it is right', do so without hesitation. There is no presentiment of Tara's that does not come to pass.

"Whatever Raghava proposes, do thou carry out with the same resolution; it were wrong to disobey him and he will punish thee for thy contempt. Take this golden chain, O Sugriva; the glorious Shri who dwells in it will leave it at my death."[1]

Hearing Bali's affectionate and brotherly words, Sugriva was bereft of joy and grew sad, resembling the moon in eclipse. Pacified by Bali and anxious to act in a fitting manner, on his brother's request, he took off the golden chain.

Having thus made over this mark of royalty, Bali, at the point of death, gazing on his son Angada, who stood before him, addressed him tenderly, saying:—

"Do thou act in a manner fitting to the time and place. Suffer pleasure and pain with equanimity; in joy and sorrow be obedient to Sugriva. Assuredly, O Long-armed Warrior, thou hast ever been cherished by me, but it is not by living thus that thou wilt earn Sugriva's respect. Do not ally thyself with those who are not his friends, still less his foes, O Conqueror of Thine Enemies! Be loyal to Sugriva, thy master, with thy senses fully controlled and ever be attentive to his interests. Be not inordinately attached to any nor hold any in contempt; both extremes are a great error, therefore pursue the middle course." With these words, suffering intensely from the arrow, his eyes staring wildly, his great teeth chattering, Bali expired.

Then a great tumult arose among the monkeys, thus deprived of their leader, and all the forest dwellers gave vent to lamentations, saying:—

[1] Shri or Lakshmi, the Consort of Vishnu and Goddess of Prosperity.

"Henceforth Kishkindha is nought but a desert, the King of Monkeys having ascended to heaven; his gardens are but a wilderness, as are the mountains and the woods. That Lion of Monkeys has passed away; the forest-dwellers are stripped of their glory.

"He engaged the illustrious and long-armed Golaba, the Gandharva, in a terrible battle lasting ten years and yet another five; that struggle did not cease day or night; then in the sixteenth year, Golaba was struck down, that foolhardy one falling under the blows of Bali of strong teeth. How has he who protected us from all peril fallen in his turn?

"That valiant Leader of Monkeys being slain, the forest-dwellers will not be able to find any safe place of refuge, like kine in the midst of a lion-infested forest."

On hearing these words, Tara, who was submerged in an ocean of grief, gazing on the face of her dead lord, fell to the earth, embracing Bali like a creeper clinging to an uprooted tree.

CHAPTER 23

Tara weeps over the Body of Bali

THEREUPON, smelling the face[1] of that King of the Monkeys, Tara, who was renowned throughout the whole world, addressed her dead consort, saying:—

"Not having followed my counsel, O Warrior, thou art now stretched on the rough, hard and stony ground. Hast thou then chosen the earth as thy love rather than myself, since thou now liest embracing it, whereas to me thou dost not utter a single word?

"Alas! Fate has favoured Sugriva, that valiant One, whose noble exploits will now cause him to be regarded as a hero. The Leaders of the Bears and Monkeys pay homage to thy prowess! Hearing their cries of distress and those of the

[1] A traditional salutation.

unfortunate Angada and myself, why dost thou not wake? Having been slain in combat, thou sleepest on that hard bed, the place where formerly thine enemies rested struck down by thy blows. O My Beloved, thou art the offshoot of a glorious race renowned for its heroism; thou, for whom war was but a sport, art gone, leaving me alone without a protector, O Proud Monarch! Nay, a wise man should never give his daughter in marriage to a warrior. Mark how I, wedded to a Kshatriya, am about to die, having been made a widow. My pride is humbled, and from this moment the path to everlasting life is closed to me. I am submerged in an ocean of grief without ground or bourne! How hard is my heart that, even seeing my dead lord, it does not break into a thousand fragments—my friend, my lord, naturally dear to me, that hero, who, falling on the field of honour under the blows of a warrior more powerful than he, has returned to the five elements. The woman who loses her consort, even if she have sons and be endowed with wealth, is yet a widow, say the wise. O Hero! Thou art lying enveloped in the blood that flows from thy limbs, as thou wert formerly with the scarlet silk of thy couch. Dust and gore covers thy body on every side, so that I cannot hold thee in mine arms, O Bull amongst Plavagas.

"To-day, Sugriva has achieved the purpose for which he engaged thee in this formidable struggle. A single arrow discharged by Rama freed him from all fear. That shaft that pierced thine heart now prevents me from embracing thy body and I can but gaze on thee, who art rejoining the five elements."

At that moment the General Nala drew out from the corpse the arrow which resembled an angry snake issuing from a mountain cave and glittered as he withdrew it, like the sun whose rays have been intercepted by the peak of a mountain. Thereupon streams of blood instantly began to flow again from those wounds on every side, resembling the water of a river that is stained by the sandstone washed down from a mountain.

Tara, wiping off the dust of combat with which he was soiled, washed her brave lord with the tears that welled up in her eyes, while she gazed lovingly down on him lying there,

pierced by Rama's arrow, his limbs all covered with blood. Then, addressing her son Angada, whose eyes were red, she said to him :—

"Behold the bitter end of thy sire, O My Son! How tragic it is! This is the outcome of an hostility born of perfidy! This body, gleaming like the sun about to rise, has entered the region of death. Embrace that proud monarch, O My Son!"

At these words, Angada rising, seized hold of the feet of his father with his rounded arms, saying :—"It is I, Angada! When I embraced thee formerly thou didst say 'Live long, O My Son', why dost thou not speak to me thus now?"

Then Tara said :—"Here I stand beside thine inanimate body, like a cow with its calf beside a bull that a lion has just slain! I do not see the gift that the King of the Gods bestowed on thee when gratified by his victory over the Asura, that glorious chain of gold, why is this? Thou shalt not be robbed of the insignia of royalty even after death, O Proud Monarch, for the King of the Mountains continues to glow after the sun has set.

"Thou didst not follow my sage counsel and I was unable to restrain thee. Thy death on the battlefield has brought about mine own and my son's also. The Goddess of Prosperity[1] has renounced both thee and me."

CHAPTER 24

Sugriva's Remorse

SEEING Tara submerged in the fathomless ocean of grief, Bali's younger brother was filled with remorse for his tragic end and overcome with distress, his face bathed in tears, in her presence, slowly approached Rama surrounded by his attendants.

Raghava, bearing all the marks of royalty, stood apart, full of dignity and majesty, bearing his bow and arrows, which resembled serpents, in his hands.

[1] Lakshmi who was said to have resided in the golden chain that Indra had bestowed on Bali.

Then Sugriva addressed him, saying:—"In accord with thy promise, O Indra among Men, thou didst accomplish this deed, the results of which are here made manifest. In the midst of my triumph, O Prince, in the presence of the slain, my spirit is troubled. On account of the dead monarch, his chief queen is wailing piteously, the city is giving vent to lamentation and Angada is plunged in affliction; all this, O Rama, robs sovereignty of any delight for me.

"At first, anger, resentment and extreme vexation caused me to view the death of my brother with satisfaction, but soon, in the presence of the corpse of that King of the Monkeys, a great sadness seized me, O First of the House of Ikshwaku. Now it is made clear to me that it would have been better to continue to live as I formerly did on the lofty summit of the Rishyamuka mountain, than slay my brother.

"'I have no desire to destroy thee! Begone!' were the words that magnanimous warrior addressed to me. This utterance was worthy of him, O Rama, and I, by killing him, have acted vilely. How can any, even if he be devoid of virtue, approve the murder of a brother or balance the happiness experienced on attaining a kingdom with the grief suffered by his death. Unquestioningly he had no intention of slaying me, being too great of soul, but in my perversity I have robbed him of his life.

"In the struggle, when, under the blows of the trees, I was about to succumb and cried out, he at once reassured me, saying: 'Do not repeat thine impudence; go hence!'

"He was ever filled with brotherly affection, nobility and justice, whereas I was full of anger, envy and the natural characteristics of a monkey.

"That which should be excluded from one's thoughts, feelings, desires and conduct is what I have harboured in murdering my brother, a crime equal to the slaying of Vishwarupa by Indra. But Indra's guilt was shared by the earth, the trees and the waters as well as women, whereas who is able to share mine? Who would wish to bear the weight of the sin of a Deer of the Trees?

"I am not worthy to be held in honour by the people, nor to be allied to the kingdom, still less do I merit the throne,

having committed such an infamous deed that entails the destruction of one of mine own race.

"I have perpetrated a vile and ignoble act, condemned by the whole world. An overwhelming sorrow fills me, as torrential rain fills a ravine. I am crushed by the bank of a river that has been trodden down by an intoxicated elephant, whose back and tail are the murder of my blood-brother, whose trunk, eyes, head and tusks are the remorse bearing me away.

"This sin, the weight of which is intolerable, O Prince, O Son of the House of Raghu, has destroyed all that is best in my heart, as fire consumes gold, leaving only dross. The company of the great leaders of monkeys, O Prince, are half dead through my fault and also on account of the violent despair of Angada.

"Rare indeed is a son as obedient as Angada, but a son is easily acquired; where however in the world can one akin to a blood brother be found, O Hero? To-day, if Angada, that Chief of Warriors, and his mother live, she, though overcome with grief will surely care for him, for bereft of him she would die. As for me, I wish to enter the blazing pyre in order to regain the affection of my brother and his son.

"Those leaders of monkeys will set out in search of Sita whenever thou commandest. O Son of that Indra among Men, I, the Destroyer of my Race, who am no longer worthy to live after committing this outrage, bid thee farewell, O Rama."

Hearing the words of the wretched Sugriva, Bali's brother, that noble descendant of the House of Raghu, Rama, began to weep, he, the Destroyer of Hostile Armies, for his mind was troubled. Thereafter, glancing here and there, that support of the earth, the protector of the world, Rama, in the midst of his distress, observed Tara groaning under the load of her affliction.

The chief queen of that Lion among Monkeys, of lovely eyes, was lying beside her lord, whom she held in her arms. Then the first of the ministers raised up that valiant consort of the King of the Monkeys, and she, trembling as they separated her from her lord, whom she was embracing, beheld Rama, whose radiance equalled the sun's, standing with his bow and arrows in his hand.

Adorned with all the distinguishing marks of royalty, that large-eyed prince, whom she had never yet beheld, that first of heroes, was recognized by Tara, whose eyes resembled a doe's, and she reflected 'It is Kakutstha!'

Then that noble and unfortunate lady, who had so suddenly been plunged into affliction, tottering, approached the one who was the equal of Indra, inaccessible and all powerful. The venerable Tara, her beautiful frame wasted with grief, drawing near to the pure-souled Rama, who by his valour ever attained his end in combat, addressed him thus :—

"Thou art of immeasurable courage, unapproachable, master of thy senses and of supreme faith; thy fame is imperishable, thou art full of wisdom and the support of the earth! Thine eyes are the colour of blood; thou bearest a bow and arrows in thine hand; thou art endowed with great strength and strong limbs; thou hast renounced the concerns of the body in this world in order to enjoy divine attributes. The shaft with which thou didst pierce my beloved lord, now use to destroy me also. When I am dead, I shall be reunited to him; without me, Bali will never be happy, O Hero. Far from me, even in heaven, amidst the red-haired Apsaras, whose locks are braided in various ways and who are gorgeously attired, he will not be happy, O Thou whose eyes resemble the pure petals of the lotus.

"Thou knowest well that he who is separated from his loved one is wretched! On account of this, slay me, so that Bali shall not suffer in mine absence. If, in the greatness of thy soul, thou shouldst reflect 'I will not be guilty of slaying a woman', say to thyself, 'She is part of Bali himself' and strike me down. It will not be a woman whom thou hast put to death, O Son of that Indra among Men! By virtue of the law and according to the different Vedic texts, women are not other than the higher self of man. Therefore the wise say that the gift of a woman is assuredly the greatest of gifts. In this wise thou dost give me back to my dear one in order that I may fulfil my duty to him, O Warrior; by this offering thou shalt not incur the sin of slaying me.

"Filled with sorrow, bereft of support, left desolate, thou shouldn'st not spare my life. The more so that far from that

sagacious Prince of Monkeys, whose joyful gait resembled an elephant's, with his glorious golden chain, the insigna of supreme majesty, I shall not live long, O Prince."

Thus spoke Tara, and in order to console her, the magnanimous Lord addressed her with wisdom and understanding, saying :—

" O Consort of a Hero, do not grieve! The whole universe is ordered by the creator; similarly it is established that the sum of good and evil is ordained by Him, nor do the Three Worlds, obedient to His will, transgress His fixed laws. Because of this, thou wilt attain supreme happiness and thy son become heir-apparent to the kingdom. The Lord has ordained this in the order of things; the consorts of heroes do not complain."

Thus comforted by the magnanimous and powerful victor of his foes, the wife of the valiant Bali, the gorgeously-attired Tara, ceased to lament.

CHAPTER 25

Bali's Funeral Rites

FULL of compassion for Sugriva's distress and that experienced by Tara and Angada, Kakutstha, who was accompanied by Lakshmana, in order to console them, said :—

" It is not by weeping that the happiness of the departed is assured! Carry out your immediate duty without delay! By shedding tears, you have observed the demands of social convention; it is vain to seek to avoid fate. Time[1] is the driving force that orders the world's events; it is Time that creates all conditions here below. None is the real agent of action and none truly causes action to take place. The world abides by virtue of the dictates of its own inner being. Time is its source, stay and goal. Time does not overstep its own bounds, nor does it suffer decrease. Self-dependent, there is neither kinship nor friendship in it, nor is it restrained by any, nor has it any cause. Assuredly, he who sees clearly is aware of the working of Time. Duty, prosperity and pleasure are subject to Time; it is on this account that Bali attained his

[1] Time in the form of Destiny.

own true state. The King of the Plavagas has reaped the fruit of his works, acquired by his merits, through his integrity and liberality. He has attained heaven on account of his observance of duty and he has taken possession of it by sacrificing his life. The Sovereign of the Monkeys has reached the highest state. Thou hast mourned long enough; now perform the last rites."

When Rama ceased speaking, Lakshmana, the Slayer of His Foes, spoke sagely to Sugriva, who was distraught, saying:—

"O Sugriva, inaugurate the obsequies without delay with the assistance of Tara and Angada. Issue the order that a large quantity of dry wood be gathered together with the sacred sandalwood, for the funeral pyre. Banish indecision; this city depends on thee. Let Angada bring garlands and robes of every kind, together with butter, oil, perfumes and all that is requisite.

"O Tara, do thou find a palanquin without delay; prompt action is always praiseworthy, the more so at such an hour. Let those who are skilful and strong, accustomed to palanquins, hold themselves in readiness to bear Bali away."

Having spoken thus to Sugriva, the on of Sumitra, Lakshmana, the Slayer of His Foes, took up his position beside his brother.

Hearing Lakshmana's command, Tara with a beating heart hastened to the cave, bent on finding a litter, and soon returned with one borne by strong monkeys to whom the work was familiar.

It was indeed magnificent, well-cushioned and resembling a chariot, the sides being marvellously decorated and enriched with carved wooden figures. Resting on wonderful supports, it was gorgeously fitted like a palace belonging to the Siddhas and was furnished with windows and balconies that were spacious and embellished with carvings, a work of extreme artistry. Large and well constructed of wood from the mountain-side, priceless ornaments, strings of pearls and splendid crowns gave it a dazzling appearance and it was covered with clay, painted red and sprinkled with sandal-paste. Festooned with wreaths of lotuses, shining like the dawn, it was strewn with innumerable flowers.

Beholding it, Rama said to Lakshmana :—" Let Bali's body be placed upon it with all speed and let the funeral ceremony proceed." Then Sugriva, weeping, assisted by Angada, raised Bali's body and placed it on the litter. Having laid the corpse on its couch, he covered it with ornaments of every kind together with wreaths and cloths. Thereafter, Sugriva, the King of the Monkeys, commanded that the last rites of his noble brother should be carried out on the banks of a river.

The great monkey leaders preceded the litter, scattering jewels of every kind in profusion. Every honour due to a king of this world was offered by the Vanaras to their lord that day.

Then the funeral rites began immediately, Angada, Tara and the others surrounding the master they had lost. On their side, the women who had lived subject to his authority gathered together crying : " O Hero, O Hero ", thus bewailing the death of their lord.

All the wives of Bali, who had been widowed, with Tara at their head, accompanied their deceased sovereign, lamenting pitifully. Their cries were heard in the depth of the forest and re-echoed through the woods and among the rocks on every side. Then on a deserted sandbank surrounded by water, formed by a torrent issuing from the mountain, innumerable monkeys, inhabitants of the forest, constructed a pyre, and those excellent bearers reverently lowered the litter from their shoulders and all stood round, plunged in mourning.

Seeing her lord lying on the funeral bed, Tara, taking his head in her lap, a prey to extreme grief, began to lament :—

" O Illustrious and Mighty Prince, O My Dear One, look on me ! Why dost thou not cast a single glance on all those who are plunged in sorrow ? Thou smilest even in death, O Noble Hero, and thy countenance resembles the rays of the rising sun ! Death, in the guise of Rama, has struck thee down, O Monkey ! A single arrow discharged by him on the field of battle has made us all widows. Thy wives, present here, who no longer know how to leap, O Indra among Kings, have come this painful road step by step on foot, is it not known to thee ? Dost thou no longer love these women whose radiant looks resemble the moon ? Why dost thou not look

on Sugriva, O King of the Monkeys ? Here are thy counsellors, O Sovereign, also Tara and the others and the leading citizens surrounding thee, all plunged in grief. Dismiss thy ministers as thou wert wont to do, O Vanquisher of thy Foes, and we will go to the woods with thee in happy dalliance."

Then the women, themselves overwhelmed with affliction, caused Tara to rise.

Assisted by Sugriva, Angada, sobbing, bore his sire to the funeral pyre, his mind distraught with grief, and, igniting the flames according to the traditional rites, keeping his father on his right hand, he circumambulated him, sorrowfully watching him setting forth on his last journey.

Having performed the ritual acts in honour of Bali, that Bull among Monkeys, accompanied by Sugriva and Tara, performed his ablutions.

Associating himself with Sugriva's loss, the mighty Kakutstha, sharing his grief, officiated at the funeral rites.

The body of Bali, chief of heroes, full of glory, whom that descendant of Ikshwaku had slain with his marvellous arrow, having been cremated, Sugriva, whose splendour resembled a clear flame, approached Rama and Lakshmana who accompanied him.

CHAPTER 26

Sugriva is installed as King

THE chief ministers encircled Sugriva, who was clad in dripping garments and overcome with grief. Approaching the illustrious Rama of imperishable exploits, he stood before him with joined palms like the Sages before the Grand-sire of the World.

Then Hanuman, the son of Maruta, who resembled a mountain of gold, his face shining like the rising sun, addressed him with profound reverence in the following words :—

" May it please thee, O Kakutstha, to reinstate Sugriva in the vast and impregnable kingdom of his mighty ancestors.

Be gracious unto him, O Lord, and permit him to return to his magnificent capital. May he regulate his affairs with the co-operation of his many friends.

"After the purificatory bath of perfumes and aromatic herbs of every kind, he will pay thee homage and bestow gifts and garlands and precious gems, scents and herbs on thee. Thou shouldst enter this marvellous cave, carved out of the mountain, and unite these monkeys with a master, thus making them happy!"

Hearing Hanuman's words, Rama, that Destroyer of Hostile Warriors, answered him with wisdom and eloquence, saying:—

"Most beloved Hanuman, in accordance with the behests of my sire I may not enter a village or city for fourteen years. Let Sugriva, that Bull among Monkeys enter that prosperous and glorious city and be installed as king according to the traditional rites!"

Having spoken thus to Hanuman, Rama said to Sugriva:— "Thou who art conversant with thy duty, proclaim that noble and valiant hero, Angada, heir-apparent to the kingdom. He is the eldest son of thy elder brother and equal to him in courage; Angada has a valiant heart and deserves to be thine heir. It is now Shravana, the first month of the rainy season,[1] that brings the floods; it is no time for military exploits therefore return to thy capital. As for me, I shall live on the mountain with Lakshmana. This cavern, carved out of the rock, is large and airy and possesses a lake whose crystalline waters abound in lotuses of every kind. When the month of Kartika[2] has come, make ready to slay Ravana, this is our pact; meantime, O Friend, return to thine home and receive the royal anointing, thus gratifying thy friends."

Thus dismissed by Rama, Sugriva, that Bull among Monkeys penetrated into the enchanting city of Kishkindha of which Bali had been the supreme lord.

Following their sovereign, thousands of monkeys prostrated themselves, touching the dust with their foreheads, and Sugriva, full of valour, called on them to rise, addressing his subjects with affection.

[1] July–August.
[2] October–November.

That mighty warrior thereafter entered his brother's private apartments and, having come there, the powerful hero, Sugriva, that Bull of Forest-dwellers, was proclaimed king by his friends, as was formerly the God of a Thousand Eyes.

Then they brought him a white canopy, decorated with gold, and two magnificent whisks of yak's tails with gleaming golden handles, also gems of every kind and grain and grass, together with blossoming branches, flowers and rich stuffs, white unguents, fragrant garlands, wild flowers and those that grow in water, sacred sandalwood, varied and numerous perfumes, roasted grain, gold, panic seed, honey, butter, curds, a tiger skin and wonderfully wrought sandals.

Thereafter six lovely young girls, bringing scents, tallow and red and yellow pigments,[1] entered joyfully and distributed gems, raiment and food among the foremost of the twice-born.

Those versed in the sacred formulas then prepared heaps of kusha grass and, igniting a fire, poured out the Soma, purified by the recitation of traditional prayers. Then Sugriva, seated on a gorgeous golden-based throne, covered with rich draperies and a magnificent three-tiered baldaquin, decorated with marvellous garlands, facing the East, was enthroned.

Those Lions among the Forest-dwellers had visited the banks of rivers and streams, far and wide, as well as the sacred places and the seas, in order to draw pure water which they brought back in pitchers of gold.

Employing golden vases and the polished horns of bulls, Gaja, Gavaksha, Gavaya, Sharabha, Gandhamadana, Mainda, Dvivida, Hanuman and Jambavan in accordance with the tradition laid down in the scriptures and on the instructions of the Sages, poured the clear and fragrant water over Sugriva, as formerly the Vasus bathed Vasava of a Thousand Eyes.

When the enthronement was completed, all those illustrious leaders of the monkeys raised a shout of joy again and again. Thereafter, in order to follow Rama's counsel, Sugriva, the King of the Monkeys, embracing Angada, installed him as heir-apparent.

Angada received the investiture, and those magnanimous Plavagas acclaimed him crying "Excellent! Excellent!",

[1] Pigments. Yellow Gorocala used for Tilak; red Manahshila, a form of red arsenic.

praising Sugriva and the great-souled Rama and Lakshmana. All were overjoyed on this auspicious occasion ; a large and merry crowd, fully satisfied, filled the streets, carrying banners and standards in the enchanting city of Kishkindha, which had been hollowed out of the mountain.

Having informed the illustrious Rama of the great coronation ceremony and being reunited with his consort, Ruma, the heroic leader of the monkey army took possession of his kingdom, like the Chief of the Immortals.

CHAPTER 27

Rama describes Prasravana

THE monkey Sugriva, having been crowned king, returned to Kishkindha, whilst Rama retired to the Mountain Prasravana.

That mountain resounded with the cries of tigers and deer, and the roaring of the lions that frequented it was heard day and night ; bushes, diverse creepers and innumerable trees were to be seen everywhere. It was inhabited by bears, lynxes and many kinds of monkeys and resembled a mass of clouds sparkling with light and beauty. On the summit was a large and spacious cave, which Rama, who was accompanied by Saumitri, chose as a dwelling for himself.

Having contracted an alliance with Sugriva, Rama, the irreproachable descendant of the House of Raghu, addressed his brother Lakshmana, the increaser of his delight, in appropriate and significant words, saying :—

" O Saumitri, Destroyer of Thy Foes ! We should establish ourselves in this agreeable rocky cavern during the rainy season. This peak, the most lofty on this mountain, is enchanting, O Prince ! White, black and dun-coloured crags adorn it and metals of every kind abound, while its rivers swarm with frogs ; it is filled with innumerable trees and charming creepers, where a variety of birds warble and splendid peacocks can be heard ; Malati, Kunda, Sinduvara, Shirishaka, Kadamba, Arjuna and Sarja trees embellish it with their blossom.

" Here is a lovely pool, festooned with flowering lotus, adjoining the cave, O Prince. Where the rock is hollowed out,

it inclines to the north east, which will make our stay more agreeable, whilst on the west it is higher and we shall be sheltered from the winds. At the entrance, O Saumitri, is a smooth black stone like a piece of antimony washed in oil; to the north, O Friend, the crest of the mountain is magnificent and looks like a mass of polished collyrium or a stationary cloud. To the south, it stretches like a white veil, resembling Mount Kailasha, rich in metals, which give it a dazzling appearance.

"Observe this river of translucent water like unto Jahnavi on the Mount Trikuta! Candana, Tilaka, Sala, Tamala, Atimuktaka, Padmaka, Sarala and Ashoka trees embellish it; Vanira, Timida, Bakula, Ketaka, Hintala, Tinisha, Nipa, Vetasa and Kritamalaka trees grow on its banks, adorning it on every side, like a woman attired in rich raiment and precious gems.

"Innumerable flocks of birds fill it with their various notes and waterfowl enliven it with their amorous frolics. The river has created enchanting islands which are frequented by swans and cranes; its smiling aspect calls to mind a beautiful woman wearing innumerable ornaments. Here it is carpeted with blue lotuses, there shining with the red and in the distance white water-lilies may be seen. Ducks sport here in their hundreds, whilst peacocks and curlews fill this river, full of charm and colour, with their cries, and groups of sages frequent it.

"See how the Sandal and Kadubha trees grow in clusters of five, as if planned by an intelligent will. Ah! What an enchanting spot! O Saumitri, Thou Scourger of Thy Foes, let us enjoy it to the full and make our retreat a happy one. Kishkindha too is not far from here, that marvellous city of Sugriva's, where songs and the sound of musical instruments are heard, O Most Illustrious of Conquerors! It is the monkey warriors sporting to the sound of drums.

"Having recovered his consort and his kingdom, that monarch of the monkeys, Sugriva, surrounded by his companions, is assuredly celebrating his return to full prosperity."

With these words, Rama with Lakshmana took up their abode on the Mountain Prasravana, where there were innumerable caves and woods.

Yet despite the beauty and abundance of fruits, Rama was unable to find the least pleasure there. Remembering the woman who had been torn from him and who was as dear to him as his very life's breath, the more now, when the moon was rising over the summit of the mountain, he was unable to sleep, passing the nights on the couch, sighing, his spirit troubled, a prey to constant grief.

Seeing Rama desolate and a victim to profound melancholy, Lakshmana, who was equally afflicted, addressed him in affectionate words, saying :—" Cease to mourn, O Hero, thou shouldst not distress thyself thus. One who grieves is never successful, thou knowest it well. In this world, one should have faith and trust in God, pursue virtue and engage in action, O Raghava ! If thy mind is agitated, thou wilt never be able to overcome that titan, thine adversary, in combat, for he is a crafty fighter.

" Banish thy grief and persist in thine endeavour ; it will be thine to triumph over this demon and his entire family. O Rama, thou canst overthrow the earth with its oceans, forests and mountains, how much more Ravana ! Wait but till the autumn, for it is now the rainy season, then thou shalt destroy him, his kingdom and his kinsfolk. Truly I desire to rekindle thy dormant valour, as at the hour of sacrifice the fire buried beneath the ashes is revived by glowing libations."

This salutary and opportune counsel of Lakshmana's was received by Rama with respect and he answered in tender and friendly accents, saying :—

" O Lakshmana, inspired by devotion, thou hast spoken to me with wisdom and courage. Henceforth I shall manifest that valour no danger is able to subdue. I shall wait for the autumn and in accord with thy counsel depend on Sugriva's willing co-operation and the state of the rivers. He who has rendered a service merits repayment ; the ungrateful who do not honour an obligation lose the respect of the good." With joined palms, Lakshmana listened with approval to this judicious speech and addressed Rama, who had regained his cheerful mien, saying : " Thou speakest truly, O Chief of Men; without fail, that monkey will bring about that which thou desirest. Meantime, while awaiting the autumn, endure

the rains, resolving to slay thine adversary. Restraining thine anger, let us pass these four months of autumn together, dwelling on the mountain frequented by lions, and then hold thyself in readiness to destroy thine enemy."

CHAPTER 28

Rama describes the Rainy Season

HAVING slain Bali and enthroned Sugriva, Rama, who was dwelling on the Malyavat plateau, said to Lakshmana :—

" Now the rainy season is here, see how the heavens are laden with clouds as large as hills. After nine months, the sky, by the action of the sun's rays, has sucked up the waters of the ocean and is now giving birth to the showers.

" Ascending to heaven by the stairway of the clouds, one might decorate the sun with garlands of Kutaja and Arjuna blossom. The sky appears like one wounded, bound with the rags of moisture-laden clouds, stained with the vivid tints of the setting sun, bordered with red. With the gentle breeze as its breath, the saffron colour lent by the twilight and its yellow clouds, the sky seems like one who is sick with love. Tormented by the sun's rays, the earth is shedding tears, like Sita racked by grief. Emerging from the heart of the clouds, cool as camphor, redolent with the fragrance of Ketaka flowers, the balmy winds can, as it were, be sipped from the palms of the hands.

" This mountain of blossoming Arjuna trees, planted with Ketakas and anointed by showers of rain, resembles Sugriva freed from his foes. These mountains, that the dark clouds clothe as with antelope skins, catch the rain drops as the sacrificial thread, their caverns filled with the wind lending them a voice; they resemble studious brahmin disciples reciting the holy Veda.

" Whipped by lightning like unto golden thongs, the sky seems to be crying out in pain. The flash that convulses the breast of that sombre cloud is to me like Sita struggling in the arms of Ravana. When covered by dense cloud, the

quarters of the sky, so dear to lovers, are blotted out, together with the moon and the stars.

"On the ridges of the mountain, as if drowned in tears, these Kutaja trees in full flower, that sighed for the rain, rekindle love in me in the midst of the grief that overwhelms me.

"The dust has settled and a cold wind blows; the heat of the summer is allayed; the martial undertaking of kings is suspended, and travellers have returned to their own country.

"Now the waterfowl, in their haste to regain the Manasa lake, have left with their dear companions. Chariots and other conveyances no longer venture on the roads, deeply rutted by continuous rain.

"Sometimes visible, sometimes invisible, the sky, sown with clouds, looks like a ocean encircled with hills. The streams carrying away the Sarja and Kadamba blossom assume a yellow hue from the metallic deposits of the rocks and pass swiftly on amidst the cry of peacocks.

"The Jambu fruit, full of savour and gilded like a bee, is pleasant to the taste, and ripe mangoes of many tints fall to the ground shaken by the wind. Clouds like high mountains, having the lightning as their banner and cranes for their garlands, give forth a reverberating sound, like great elephants intoxicated with Mada juice who are about to fight.

"The grassy slopes of those forest tracts, revived by the rain where delighted peacocks dance, gleam brightly under the moon at night. Charged with an immense weight of water, clouds surrounded by cranes emit a muttering sound and in constant movement journey on and on, sometimes resting on the mountain tops. In their joyous circling flight, cranes, in love with the clouds, resemble an enchanting garland of lotus flowers suspended in space at the mercy of the breeze.

"The earth with its fresh grass strewn with tiny ladybirds, looks like a woman, whose limbs are swathed in a bright green cloth flecked with red.

"Sleep falls gently on Keshava;[1] the river runs swiftly to rejoin the sea; the crane is happy to be united with the cloud; fair ones approach their lovers with joy.

[1] Tradition holds that the Lord Narayana fell into the cosmic sleep in the rainy season, prior to the rebirth of Brahma, who issued from his navel.

" See how the groves are rendered gay by the dance of peacocks and how the Kadamba trees are covered with flowers ; bulls, filled with desire, follow the cows and the earth is rendered charming by forests and fields of grain.

" Rivers rush onwards, clouds discharge their rain, frenzied elephants are trumpeting, the woods grow more fair, lovers yearn for their loved ones, peacocks dance and the monkeys have regained their zest for life. Drunk with the aroma of the blossoming Ketaka trees, amongst the thundering waterfalls, the great elephants mix their amorous trumpeting with the peacocks' cries.

" Flowers, bruised by the downpour, are expelling their nectar, that the bees gaily plundered from the branches of the Kadamba, trees and now it is falling drop by drop. With their abundant fruit resembling ashes, full of savour, the boughs of the Jambu tree are swarming with bees.

" Following the woodland track amidst the hills, the chief of the elephants, hearing the roar of thunder behind him, halts in his tracks, thirsting to fight and, deeming it to be a challenge, turns back in fury.

" Filled now with the humming bees, now with blue-necked peacocks that dance or great elephants in rut, the woods take on a thousand varying aspects.

" Abounding in Kadamba, Sarja, Arjuna and Kandala trees, the forest with the ground saturated with water, resembling wine and the intoxicated peacocks that cry and dance, takes on the appearance of a banqueting hall. The raindrops, like pearls, falling in the folds of the leaves, rest there happily, and the many coloured birds drink of them, delighted by this gift from the King of the Gods.

" The soft humming of the bees, the joyous croaking of the frogs blended with the rumbling thunder of the clouds, resembling the roll of drums, create a veritable orchestra in the forest.

" The peacocks with their richly decorated tails are the choir, some dancing, some calling, here and there clinging to the tops of the trees.

" Roused by the sound of thunder, frogs of different shapes and colour waken from hibernation and whipped by the rain, croak loudly.

" The rivers, frequented by waterfowl, bear away their crumbling banks proud of their speed, and happy in their fullness, rush towards their lord, the ocean.

" Sombre clouds charged with fresh rain melt into each other and resemble the rocks scorched by the forest fire whose bases cohere with those that are equally laid bare.

" Elephants wander in the midst of the charming groves, that are filled with the cries of intoxicated peacocks in the grass sprinkled with ladybirds and planted with Nipa and Arjuna trees. Ardently embracing the lotuses, whose stamens are flattened by the recent showers, the bumble bees eagerly drink the nectar from these and from the Kadamba blossom that has been laid waste. Bull elephants in rut and leaders of kine disport themselves in the forest; the king of beasts bounds through the thickets and the kings of men are enraptured and forget their cares and anxieties whilst the Chief of the Gods is disporting himself in the clouds. Torrents of rain loosed from the sky, causing the seas and rivers to overflow, flood the streams, lakes and ponds together with the entire earth. With sheets of rain falling and the wind blowing with extreme violence, the banks of the rivers are swept away and the waters surge onwards so that the familiar paths can no longer be trodden.

" Like kings bathed by their servants, great mountains stand under the downpour from the clouds, which resemble ewers emptied by the King of the Celestials assisted by the Wind God, and seen thus, stand forth in all their native splendour.

" The sky, overcast with cloud, renders the stars invisible; the earth is saturated with the recent rains and the four quarters are shrouded in darkness. The summits of the mountains washed by the rain sparkle, their great cataracts twisting and falling like strings of pearls. Obstructed in their course by the jutting rocks, these mighty waterfalls precipitate themselves from the heights into the valleys like necklaces of pearls that break and scatter. Those rushing torrents, bathing the lower reaches of the rocky crests, fall into immense chasms, where they find themselves imprisoned and spray, resembling strings of pearls, which celestial nymphs have broken in the violence of their emotions, are scattered in unparalleled showers on every side.

" Only when the birds withdraw to the trees and the lotus closes, whilst the evening jasmine opens, can one divine that the sun has set behind the Astachala Mountain. Kings postpone their warlike expeditions and even the army, already on the march, halts ; hostilities cease, for the roads are water-logged. It is the month of Prausthapada,[1] when the brahmins who chant the Veda, the singers of the Sama Veda, begin their studies.

" Assuredly Bharata, the King of Koshala, having collected the revenue and completed the storing of provisions, is now engaged in celebrating the festival of the month of Ashada.[2]

" The Sarayu river must be overflowing its banks and the current increasing in velocity, like the shouts of acclamation with which Ayodhya will greet my return.

" Sugriva will be listening with joy to the sheets of rain falling, since he has overcome his adversary, recovered his consort and regained his vast kingdom; but I, O Lakshmana, separated from Sita, exiled from my immense dominion, resemble the bank of a river that has been carried away by the current and precipitated into an abyss.

" My grief is without bourne, the rains close every avenue and Ravana appears to me a formidable and invincible foe. Unable to travel on these impassable roads, I wish to make no demands on Sugriva despite his devotion, who after prolonged suffering is reunited with his spouse ; I do not desire to press for an interview on account of the urgency of his private concerns.

" As for that, when he has rested and the time is ripe, Sugriva will of himself remember the help he has promised me, there is no doubt of it. Because of this, I wait hopefully, till the rivers and Sugriva are favourable to me, O Thou who bearest the auspicious marks of royalty !

" A favour obliges a man to show gratitude ; the ungrateful who fail to honour an obligation wound the heart of honest men."

Lakshmana, standing with joined palms, fully concurred with these words to which he listened with extreme respect;

[1] Prausthapada—August–September.

[2] Ashada—June–July.

then addressing the magnanimous Rama with a joyful air, he said :—

" O Prince, the King of the Monkeys will not delay in carrying out the desire thou hast expressed! Wait for the autumn and let the rainy season pass, re-affirming thy resolution to overcome thine adversary."

CHAPTER 29

Hanuman urges Sugriva to honour his Promise

HANUMAN observed that the heavens had become serene, free from lightning or cloud, filled with the cry of cranes and marvellously illumined by the light of the moon.

Sugriva however, having attained his end, had become indifferent to his duty and proper responsibilities, allowing his mind to engage in lower pursuits. His ambitions fulfilled, he ceased to harbour any solicitude concerning his affairs and gave himself up to enjoyment with women, satisfying every capricious desire.

Having realised his hopes and his fears being allayed, he passed the time by day and by night with his favourite consort Ruma and also Tara who was equally dear to him, as the Lord of the Gods disports himself among the troops of nymphs and musicians. Leaving the administration of the state to his ministers without supervision, his realm not being in peril, he became a slave to sense pleasures.

Seeing this, the resourceful Hanuman, the eloquent son of Maruta, conversant with what ought to be done and knowing the appropriate time for the performance of duty, approaching the King of the Monkeys, who well understood what was placed before him, spoke to him with confidence, in well chosen words inspired by respect and affection, words that were pleasing, full of good sense, practical, true, salutary, in accord with the law and duty, expedient and diplomatic. Even such was the speech of Hanuman, which he addressed to the King of the Monkeys.

He said :—

" Thou hast recovered thy throne and thy glory and added to the prosperity of thine house; it now remains for thee to concern thyself with thy friends ; this is thy duty ! He who, recognizing the fitting moment, conducts himself honourably towards his friends, sees the increase of his glory and his power.

" He who treats with equal regard, wealth, sceptre, friends and life itself, O Prince, acquires a vast empire. Let this be thy conduct, establish thyself in the path of honour, this is what thou shouldst do for thy friends in accordance with thy vow.

" He who does not abandon everything in order to occupy himself with the interests of his friends, whatever his aim, enthusiasm or undertakings, is courting failure.

" In the same way, he who allows the occasion for coming to the assistance of his friends to pass is worthless, even if he achieve great things. We are losing this opportunity of serving the interests of our friend Raghava, O Vanquisher of Thy Foes. Let us occupy ourselves with finding Vaidehi. Rama has not reminded thee that the time appointed has gone by, though he is fully conversant with the hour ; albeit hard pressed, that sagacious prince has graciously resigned himself, O King !

" It is to Raghava that thou owest the prosperity of thine House, he wields immense influence, his power is immeasurable, his personal attributes incomparable. Render back the service he has done to thee, O Chief of the Monkeys, call together the leaders of thy people ! The delay is not yet serious, as long as Rama does not call upon thee to redeem thy promise, but if thou defer till he constrain thee by force, it will be too late.

" Even had he done nought for thee, it would be thy duty to assist him in his quest, O Chief of Monkeys ! How much more so after the service he has rendered thee in re-establishing thee on thy throne and slaying Bali.

" Thou art powerful and thy courage is extreme, O Thou who rulest the monkeys and the bears, therefore thou art under a greater obligation to assist Rama.

" Without doubt the son of Dasaratha is able to overcome the Gods, the demons and the great serpents with his arrows, he is merely awaiting the fulfilment of thy vow. It was not without risking his life that he bestowed such happiness on

thee. Let us scour the earth and, if need be, the sky, in search of Sita. Neither the Devas, Danavas, Gandharvas or Asuras accompanied by the hosts of Maruts, nor the Yakshas are able to make him tremble, much less the titans.

" It is imperative, O Prince of the Tawny-coloured Ones, that thou shouldst try to please Rama with thine whole soul, who is endowed with that power that formerly succoured thee.

" We will not hesitate to enter the subterranean regions beneath the waters nor ascend into the sky if thou commandest it, O King of the Monkeys ! Do thou decree who shall proceed and how and in what order. There are more than ten million monkeys of indomitable strength ready to serve thee, O Irreproachable Prince ! "

Hearing these apposite and reasonable words, Sugriva, in his rectitude, made a supreme decision.

Wisely commanding Nila of inexhaustible valour to gather the troops from every quarter, he said :—

" Do thou muster mine entire army with its leaders and generals, whom none can resist, and bring them here immediately. The Plavagas who are stationed on the frontiers are skilled and brave, let them come here, see to it personally that I am instantly obeyed. He who does not present himself within fifteen days from now will be summarily executed, none shall escape.

" With Angada, seek out the veterans, carry out my orders scrupulously."

Having made all these arrangements, the Chief of the Monkeys, the valiant Sugriva, returned to his private apartments.

CHAPTER 30

Description of Autumn

SUGRIVA re-entered his palace, and the sky being free from cloud, Rama, who, during the rainy season, had been overcome by the intensity of his grief, gazing on the pure and tranquil moon and the marvellously clear autumnal nights, perceiving

that Sugriva was leading a life of pleasure and reflecting on his own loss, also that time was passing, fell into a profound melancholy.

Though he soon mastered his mood, yet the wise Raghava remained absorbed in the thought of Sita, and seeing the sky free from cloud taking on a serene aspect, re-echoing to the call of cranes, he began to lament in sorrowful accents. Seated on the jutting ridge of a mountain rich in gold, under the autumnal sky, his thoughts went out to his beloved spouse and he reflected :—

" What joy can my youthful wife experience now, she, who loved the call of the cranes in the forest and imitated their note ? In mine absence, how can that tender maid take any delight in the tufts of flowers shining like pure gold, she, who formerly wakened to the cry of the swans ? What felicity can Sita of soft speech and tender form enjoy now ?

" When she hears the cry of the wild geese, travelling in skeins, what will become of that princess, whose eyes are as large as lotuses ? I feel no happiness without Sita, whose eyes resembled the doe's, when wandering by river, lake and forest, and my beloved in her tenderness will suffer cruelly in mine absence, through the desire that the beauty of autumn inspires." Thus did that son of a King lament like unto the Saranga bird when it solicits water from Indra.

At that moment, Lakshmana, who had gone out in careful search of fruits, returned from the enchanting mountain slopes and perceiving his elder brother absorbed in sorrowful thoughts, his mind distraught, alone in that solitude, the sagacious Saumitri, who was deeply distressed by the grief of his unfortunate brother, said to him :—

" Why, O Noble Prince, hast thou become a slave to love ? Why this reversion of thy former resolution ? Thy distress precludes thee from reflecting calmly ; tranquillity of mind is essential to carrying out any design ; after mature consideration, the time ordained together with the strength of thine ally should be utilised by thee for carrying out thy project without delay, O Friend !

" Nay ! The daughter of Janaka supported by thee, will not be of easy access to the foe, O Protector of the Human

Race. None may approach a blazing fire without being burnt, O Valiant Warrior ! "

On this, Rama answered the indomitable Lakshmana in characteristic accents that were worthy of him, saying :—

" Thy words are practical and wise, full of good sense and in accord with duty and the law. We should reflect on how to act without delay ; this quest must be pursued ; when one is powerful, invincible, youthful and valiant, one should have no misgivings concerning one's success."

Then recollecting Sita, whose eyes were as large as lotus petals, Rama with a downcast mien again addressed Lakshmana, saying :—

" The Thousand-eyed God, having saturated the earth with water and caused the grain to germinate, his task accomplished, is now resting. The clouds, which amidst a deep and prolonged rumbling spread over the mountains, forests and cities, letting loose their showers, are stationary, O Prince. The fury of the thunderclouds, resembling intoxicated elephants, black as the leaves of the blue lotus, darkening the ten regions has abated. Swollen with water, the clouds have visited the fragrant groves of Kutaja and Arjuna trees with wind and rain and have now disappeared in their airy flight, O My Friend. The clamour of the herds of elephants, the cry of the peacocks and the sound of the rain have ceased, O Irreproachable Lakshmana.

" Washed by dense clouds that have removed their impurities, the mountains with their magnificent escarpments shine forth illumined by the moon's rays.

" Autumn now manifests her grace in the branches of the Saptacchada trees, in the light of sun, moon and stars and in the gait of the majestic elephants, and her influence appears everywhere. In the tufts of lotuses opening to the first rays of the sun, in the scent of the Saptacchada flowers, in the music of the humming bees, autumn shines in all her splendour.

" The geese with their large and graceful wings, friends of the God of Love, have just arrived, covered with the pollen of the lotuses and are walking to and fro on the sandy banks of the rivers, disporting themselves with the swans.

" In the intoxicated elephants, in the kine, in the tranquilly flowing rivers, autumn is reflected in her myriad aspects.

Seeing the sky bereft of cloud, the peacocks in the woods, shorn of their caudal beauty, are no longer attracted to their chosen ones and having lost their brilliance, their delight has evaporated and they appear absorbed in their own thoughts.

" The tall trees of sweet fragrance, the tips of whose branches are bent under the weight of their blossom, shining like gold, enchanting to look upon, seem to light up the depth of the forest.

" Accompanied by their females, the great elephants, frequenters of the pools covered with lotuses and the woods, who formerly stood amidst the flowers, intoxicated with ichor, now walk with a slow and languid pace, merged in amorous sport.

" The sky has cleared and is as bright as a drawn sword; the water in the river flows slowly; a breeze, refreshing the white water lilies, blows and those regions delivered from the darkness shine forth.

" Freed from mud by the growing warmth of the sun, the soil is covered with a thick dust that the wind carries to a great distance.

" It is the time when kings, at enmity with each other, start on their campaigns.

" Shining with beauty with which the autumn has endowed them, exulting, their limbs powdered with dust, mad with desire and thirsting to fight, the bulls bellow amidst the kine.

" Sharing his love, the noble she elephant, eager and affectionate, with a slow tread circles round the bull intoxicated with ichor and follows him in the woods.

" Bereft of their tail feathers, their marvellous natural adornment, wandering on the banks of the rivers, the peacocks, as if scorned by the cranes, move about forlornly, in flocks.

" With their formidable cries, the chief of the elephants strike terror in the ducks and geese standing in the pools covered with flowering lotuses and, having sprinkled themselves with water again and again, begin to drink.

" On the rivers, free of mud, with their sandy banks and peaceful ripples frequented by herds of kine, re-echoing to the cry of cranes, herons frolic joyously.

" The sound of the rivers, the clouds, the waterfalls, the winds, the cry of the peacocks and the croaking of frogs has

ceased. Many coloured venomous serpents, greatly emaciated, deprived of food during the rains, tormented with hunger emerge from their holes where they have been confined so long.

" The evening, caressed by the rays of the trembling moon, casts aside her veil, revealing her roseate countenance with its stars, in an ecstasy of joy. The night, whose gentle face is the full moon, resembles a youthful woman, the clusters of stars her smile and charming mien ; lit by the orb at its full it seems as if wrapped in a white mantle.

" Gorged with ripe grain, an enchanting flock of cranes joyfully crosses the sky in rapid flight, blown by the breeze like a garland of flowers tastefully interwoven.

" The waters of the great lake, with a solitary swan floating there asleep amidst countless waterlilies, resembles the heavens free from cloud, illumined by the full moon and a myriad stars. With their girdle of swans, their wreaths of blue and white lotus in flower, the great lakes are surpassingly beautiful and resemble lovely women decorated with jewels.

" At break of dawn, blending with the sound of the breeze blowing through the reeds, resembling the notes of a flute, the deep roarings in the caverns, increased by the wind and the bellowing of bulls, seem to answer one another.

" The river banks adorned with flowering grasses, stirred by a gentle breeze, resemble bright linen cloths from which the stains have been washed away.

" Bumble bees, roaming at will in the forest, gorged with nectar, heavy with the pollen of lotuses, where they have rested, in an excess of joy accompanied by their loved ones, follow the God of the Wind, in the woods.

" The calm waters, the flowering grasses, the cry of curlews, the ripened paddy fields, the gentle breeze, the immaculate moon, are all celebrating the departure of the rainy season.

" To-day the rivers, wearing their silver fish as girdles, flow by slowly, like lovely women, moving languidly, having passed the night in love.

" With the geese, aquatic plants[1] and the reeds that cover them like woven shawls, the rivers, sparkling, resemble the faces of women.

[1] Aquatic plants, literally Shaivala—Vallisneria Octandra or Blyza.

" In the forest, adorned with arches of blossom and full of the joyous humming of bees, the God of Love, to-day, impatiently wields his fiery bow.

" Having saturated the earth with their profuse showers and filled the lakes and rivers, preparing the soil for the harvest, the clouds have disappeared from the sky.

" Little by little, the rivers in autumn uncover their banks, like chaste brides disclosing their charms.

" O My Friend, the waters having subsided, the rivers re-echo to the cry of ospreys and flocks of geese abound in the ponds.

" It is the time, O Beloved Prince, when kings declare war on each other and thirsty for conquest enter upon their campaigns. The inception of hostilities for monarchs has begun, O Prince, and I do not see Sugriva making ready for an expedition of this kind.

" Asana, Saptaparna, Kovidara trees are in full flower as also the Bandhujiva plant and the Tamala trees on the mountain slopes.

" O Lakshmana! Behold the sandy banks of the rivers abound in swans, cranes, geese and osprey that are seen on every side. The four months of rain that have passed seemed to me like a hundred years, so filled with grief was I on account of Sita's absence.

" Like the Chakravaka bird with its mate, she followed me in the forest and the dreadful loneliness of the Dandaka solitudes seemed to that youthful woman a garden of delight. Though far from my beloved, overcome with sorrow, bereft of my kingdom and an exile, yet Sugriva shows no pity for me, O Lakshmana!

" ' He is without support, deprived of his kingdom, affronted by Ravana, unhappy, exiled, that amorous prince has taken refuge with me.' Thus will Sugriva speak, O My Friend, and in his perversity, he, the King of the Monkeys, holds me in contempt, I, the Scourge of My Foes. Having fixed a time to set out in search of Sita and entered into a formal contract to do so, this false one, having obtained his ends, has forgotten his pledge.

" Do thou enter Kishkindha and in my name, address that Bull of the Monkeys, the wretched Sugriva, the slave of domestic bliss, saying :—' He who, having raised the hopes of those who have sought his help in adversity and who formerly rendered

him a service, fails to fulfil his promise to them, is considered the least of men in this world but that valiant one, who for good or evil loyally honours his given word, he is the best of men.

" 'Even the carnivorous beasts refuse to feed on the flesh of those ungrateful beings, who, having obtained their end, do not assist their friends to do so in their turn.

" 'Assuredly thou desirest to behold the gleam of my gold backed bow, resembling a series of lightning flashes, stretched ready for combat. Then shalt thou hear the dread twanging of my bowstring like unto the clash of thunder, when in wrath, I range the field of battle.'

" Having brought my renowned valour to his remembrance, O Illustrious Prince, thou, who art my companion, it would be strange if he did not pause and reflect. O Thou Conqueror of Hostile Cities, since he, the King of the Plavagas, has gained his desire, he no longer recollects the time chosen, and the King of the Monkeys, wholly given over to pleasure, does not appear to be aware that four months have passed. Drinking and roystering with his ministers and his court, Sugriva does not trouble himself about us, who are filled with anxiety.

" Go and address him, O Valiant Hero, inform him of our displeasure and speak to him in those terms, which are inspired by my wrath, saying:—'The Gate of Death, through which Bali passed, is not closed! O Sugriva, honour thy pledge, for fear that thou mayest follow in the path taken by him!' Thy brother died alone, struck down by mine arrow but if thou failest in faith, I shall destroy thee together with thine whole House.'

" O Greatest of Men, say all that will further our desire, we must not delay, O Prince. Say to him 'Honour the promise thou didst make to me, O King of the Monkeys, recollect that virtue is eternal or, losing thy life this day, thou shalt fall into the jaws of death, where my shafts shall despatch thee to seek out Bali!' "

Seeing his elder brother, who was afflicted in his great misfortune, in the throes of violent anger, Lakshmana, burning with courage, the promoter of the glory of Manu's Race, profoundly distressed, felt a deep resentment towards the King of the Monkeys.

CHAPTER 31

Lakshmana goes to Kishkindha

THE offspring of that Indra among Men, the son of a king, then spoke to his elder brother, who, full of tenderness, cheerless, despite his natural gaiety and full of distress, had but now expressed his desire to him:—

" Nay, that monkey is not a civilized being; he does not consider the immediate consequences of his acts nor will he enjoy the glory of the monkey realm; it is not fitting he should take advantage of circumstances in this wise. In his stupidity, he has become the slave of domestic bliss without calling to mind the debt he owes to thee; let him therefore die and seek out Bali; the throne should not be conferred on one devoid of virtue. I am unable to contain my violent rage; I shall slay that disloyal Sugriva immediately. That son of Bali with the leaders of the monkeys shall this day assist us to recover the princess."

Then Rama, the Destroyer of Warriors, in terms that were prudent and appropriate, addressed Lakshmana, who bow in hand desired to follow up his words with action and who full of ire was burning to fight:—

" Nay, thine equals in this world do not commit such an outrage,[1] the warrior who nobly masters his anger, is the greatest of heroes. Do not belie thy natural integrity, O Lakshmana! Recollect the feelings of joy that the alliance with Sugriva formerly aroused in thee. Speak to him in moderate tones, omitting all harsh expressions, regarding his delay and his tardiness."

Thus counselled by his elder brother, that Lion among Men, the valiant Lakshmana, the Slayer of Hostile Warriors, entered the town of Kishkindha. The sage and virtuous Lakshmana, eager to carry out what was agreeable to his brother, filled with indignation, entered the abode of that monkey, bearing in his

[1] That is slay a friend.

hand his bow, resembling Indra's, high as the peak of a mountain, like unto Mt. Mandara.

Faithful to the behest of Rama, his younger brother, the equal of Brihaspati, reflected in himself how he should address and answer Sugriva and, filled with ire on account of his brother's anguish and displeasure, Lakshmana advanced like a loosened tempest, uprooting Sala, Tala, Ashwakarna and other trees in his impetuous strides, like a great elephant shattering the mountains and crushing the rocks under his feet, thus cutting short he distance to his goal.

That Tiger among the Ikshvakus then beheld the splendid city of the King of Monkeys, the inaccessible Kishkindha, hollowed out of the mountain and filled with warriors. His lips trembling in his fury against Sugriva, Lakshmana beheld those formidable looking monkeys ranging round the city and seeing that foremost of men, those monkeys resembling elephants, tore up parts of the mountain, rocks, boulders and great trees. Lakshmana, observing them seizing hold of these missiles, felt his anger redoubled, like a brazier lit with innumerable brands, and they, beholding that infuriated warrior, who resembled the God of Death himself at the dissolution of the worlds, fled in their hundreds on all sides.

At that, those Foremost of Monkeys, returning to Sugriva's palace, informed him of Lakshmana's approach and of his anger, but that King of the Monkeys who was passing his time in dalliance with Tara paid no heed to what those Lions among Monkeys were saying.

Thereupon, under the orders of the ministers, those monkeys, their hair standing on end, large as mountains or elephants or clouds, issued out of the city and terrible to behold with their nails and teeth, their jaws like tigers, stationed themselves in the open. Many had the strength of ten elephants, others were ten times as strong and some were endowed with the strength of a thousand elephants.

Lakshmana, who was enraged, recognized that Kishkindha, filled with these monkeys, who were armed with trunks of trees and endowed with great valour, was difficult of access. And emerging from the walls and ditches, these monkeys stood courageously in the open field.

In the face of Sugriva's debauched indifference and the provocative attitude of the monkeys, the valiant Lakshmana, guardian of the interests of his elder brother, was seized with fresh anger, and that lion among men, heaving deep and burning sighs, his glances flashing with fury, resembled a brazier belching forth smoke.

With his pointed darts as the flickering tongue, his military ardour the poison, his bow the coils, he resembled a five-headed snake or the blazing fire at the end of the world or the enraged serpent king.

Then Angada, who had gone out to meet him, in his terror, suffered extreme discomfiture and that illustrious warrior Lakshmana, his eyes red with anger, commanded him saying :— " O Child, inform Sugriva of my advent and tell him that the younger brother of Rama has come. O Conqueror of thy Foes, tormented by his brother's grief, Lakshmana waits at thy gate. Do thou seek to prepare that monkey by addressing him in this wise and return with all speed to inform me of his answer, O Dear Child."

Hearing these words spoken by Lakshmana, Angada, filled with distress, went to seek out his uncle, who now occupied his father's place and said to him : " Saumitri is come ! "

Then Angada, overwhelmed by the harsh accents of that hero, his countenance bearing the traces of profound distress, went away, first offering obeisance to the feet of the king in great reverence and thereafter to those of Ruma.

That valiant prince, having touched the feet of his father, then made obeisance to his mother also and finally pressed the feet of Ruma having informed Sugriva of what had taken place.

Sugriva, heavy with sleep and fatigue, did not wake up but lay in a drunken stupor, sexual indulgence having dulled his reason.

Meantime, seeing Lakshmana, fear troubling their hearts, the monkeys welcomed him with shouts to appease his wrath. Beholding him near at hand, they raised a great clamour, resembling a huge wave or the growl of thunder or the roaring of lions; and this great tumult roused that red-eyed monkey adorned with garlands who was bemused with liquor, his mind bewildered.

Recognizing his voice, two ministers of that king of the monkeys, accompanied by Angada, approached him. Both were of noble and venerable appearance and were named Yaksha and Prabhava. Ingratiating themselves by their speech that went straight to the point and sitting down near the king, who resembled Indra, the Lord of the Maruts, they said to him :—

" There are two brothers, full of nobility and power, Rama and Lakshmana, who in human form are worthy of the kingdom they confer on others. One of them, bow in hand, stands at the door ; beholding him, the monkeys, terrified, are raising a great clamour. This brother of Raghava, Lakshmana, his spokesman, charged by him to communicate his wishes, has come at Rama's command and the son of Tara, the beloved Angada, has been sent to thee in all haste by Lakshmana, O King, as his deputy, O Irreproachable Prince.

" That valiant warrior Lakshmana stands at the door, his eyes inflamed with anger and consumes the monkeys with his glances, O King. Go quickly and place thy head at his feet with all those who belong to thee, O Great Monarch, so that his anger may be instantly appeased.

" That which the virtuous Rama desires, do thou carry out scrupulously so that his wrath be softened ; execute his wishes with care, O King, fulfil thy pledge and be true to thy word ! "

CHAPTER 32

Hanuman's Speech

At these words of Angada and his ministers, Sugriva, learning of Lakshmana's anger, rose from his seat and came to himself.

Having considered the different aspects of the matter, he addressed his counsellors, who were versed in the sacred formulas, with which he too was conversant and of which he was a strict observer, saying :—

" I have neither spoken nor acted wrongfully; why is the brother of Raghava, Lakshmana, incensed against me, I ask

myself? Evilly disposed persons, enemies ever looking for an occasion to charge me with imaginary crimes, have set the younger brother of Raghava against me. It behoves ye all to reflect on the matter wisely in order to discover the cause of his anger. Assuredly I do not fear Lakshmana any more than Raghava, but a friend who becomes angry without reason invariably creates anxiety. It is easy to contract a friendship, but extremely difficult to sustain it, for owing to the fickleness of the mind a friendship can be broken for the most trivial reason. Because of this, I am apprehensive in regards to the magnanimous Rama, for I have not been able to render back a proportionate service to him for that which he has done for me."

Sugriva having spoken, Hanuman, that foremost of monkeys, answered according to his understanding, saying :—

" It is in no way surprising, O Chief of the Monkey Tribes, that thou art unable to forget the significant and unexpected service rendered to thee by Rama. Assuredly that hero, for thy well-being, fearlessly slew Bali, equal to Indra in power. Undoubtedly Rama's feelings have been wounded, which is evidenced by his sending his brother Lakshmana, the increaser of his happiness, as his deputy, to thee. O Thou, the most skilled in discerning the seasons, autumn is here in all her glory, the Saptacchada and Shyama trees being in full flower, but thou, given up to pleasure, doth not perceive it. The sky, free from cloud, is filled with brilliant stars and planets, and on all the regions, lakes and rivers, calm prevails.

"The time has come to inaugurate the search for Sita of which thou art conversant, O Bull among Monkeys. Finding thee forgetful, Lakshmana has come to inform thee that the hour is at hand. Grieving over the abduction of his spouse, the magnanimous Rama will speak harshly to thee through the lips of this hero ; is it a cause for wonder ? Having acted improperly towards him, I see no other means tending to thy welfare but to offer obeisance to Lakshmana and crave his pardon.

" It is the duty of counsellors to utter what is true freely to a king and it is for this that after mature reflection I have spoken thus.

"Armed with his bow, Rama, in his wrath, is able to subdue the whole world as also the Gods, the Asuras and the Gandharvas. It is unwise to provoke one of whom subsequently forgiveness must be craved, the more so, when the recollection of a favour received places one under the obligation of gratitude. Therefore incline thine head before this man with thy son and thine entourage, O King, and remain faithful to thy promise, as a woman to her husband's will. It is ill-advised of thee to oppose Rama's behests, even in thought, for thou art well aware of this man's power. whose prowess is equal to Indra and the Gods."

CHAPTER 33

Tara pacifies Lakshmana

At Angada's request, and in accord with Rama's command, Lakshmana, the slayer of hostile warriors, entered the beautiful city of Kishkindha situated amidst caves.

Seeing Lakshmana approaching, the highly powerful monkeys of immense size guarding the gate, stood with joined palms and beholding the son of Dasaratha filled with wrath, breathing heavily, dared not obstruct his entry.

Then that mighty warrior, gazing about him, beheld that great city decorated with jewels and flowery gardens and rendered magnificent by heaps of precious stones with which it was filled; abounding in spacious buildings and temples, with jewels of every kind in abundance offered as merchandise, it was embellished by flowering trees covered with every desirable fruit.

Born of the Gods and Gandharvas, monkeys, able to change their form at will, wearing celestial garlands and raiment, added to the beauty of the city by their charming appearance.

Fragrant with the scent of sandalwood, aloes and lotus, the broad highways were also filled with the intoxicating odour of Maireya and Madhu[1].

[1] Wines made from honey.

Lakshmana beheld great mansions also, as high as the Vindhya and Meru mountains, and streams of pure water flowing through the city. He surveyed the enchanting abodes of Angada, Mainda, Dvivida, Gavaya, Gavaksha, Gaja, Sharabha, Vidhumati, Sampati, Suryaksha, Hanuman, Virabahu, Subahu and the great souled Nala, Kumuda, Sushena, Tara, Jambavan, Dadhibaktra, Nila, Sunetra and Supatala, dwellings like unto white clouds adorned with fragrant garlands and filled with jewels, grain and lovely women.

The magnificent and inaccessible abode of the King of Monkeys, like the palace of Mahendra, stood on a white rock and was decorated with pinnacled domes resembling the peaks of Mt. Kailasha. Trees in full flower, bearing fruits of every kind of delicious flavour, had been planted there and resembled blue clouds, enchanting with their cool shade, celestial blooms and golden-hued fruit.

Valiant monkeys, bearing weapons in their hands, guarded the resplendent gateway, the arches of which were of fine gold adorned with magnificent garlands.

The mighty Lakshmana entered Sugriva's palace without hindrance as the sun enters a great cloud, and having traversed the seven courtyards, filled with conveyances and seats, he beheld the inner apartments of that Chief of the Monkeys abounding in gold and silver couches with rich coverlets and fine seats.

On entering there, he heard sweet music blending with the rhythmic cadence of singing to the accompaniment of stringed instruments; and in the private apartments of Sugriva, many a high-born woman, distinguished for her youth and beauty, sumptuously attired, crowned with flowers and engaged in weaving garlands was observed by the high-souled Lakshmana. He noted too, that there were none of the king's attendants, who were not richly apparelled, happy, well fed and eager to offer their services.

Hearing the sound of the women's anklets and girdles, the virtuous Lakshmana became confused and incensed by the tinkling of those ornaments; and that hero stretched the cord of his bow so that the twanging resounded on all sides. Thereafter the valiant Lakshmana, indignant on Rama's account, withdrew into a corner and stood silent, reflecting on his

presumption in entering Sugriva's private apartments. Hearing the twanging of the bow, Sugriva, the King of the Monkeys, recognizing the presence of Lakshmana, began to tremble on his splendid throne.

He reflected : ' As Angada previously informed me, Saumitri, through brotherly solicitude, has undoubtedly come hither.'

Then that monkey, informed by Angada, his tidings now made doubly sure by the sound of the bow, understood that Lakshmana had come and he grew pale, his heart being filled with apprehension, and Sugriva, the King of the Monkeys, addressed Tara, of charming appearance, in well considered words saying:—

" O Lady of Lovely Eyebrows, what cause for displeasure has the younger brother of Rama, who is gentle by nature? Why has he come hither like a raving madman? Dost thou know the reason of this prince's anger? Assuredly that lion among men cannot be enraged without cause. If we have unwittingly displeased him, then considering the matter carefully, inform me without delay or go thyself to him.

" O Lovely One, by thy sweet speech seek to conciliate him. Seeing thee, his mind will become tranquil and his anger be allayed, for great warriors do not permit themselves to treat women with harshness. When thy gentle words have soothed him and his mind and senses are under control, then I, in my turn, will approach that prince, whose eyes are as large as lotus petals and who is the conqueror of his foes."

On this, Tara, swaying slightly, her eyes bright from the drinking of wine, her girdle loosened, hanging by a golden thread, wearing the insignia of royalty, with downcast looks approached Lakshmana. And when that great warrior beheld the consort of the King of the Monkeys, he, restraining his wrath in the presence of a woman, bowed his head, conducting himself like an ascetic.

Under the influence of wine and observing the benign attitude of that Prince, Tara, discarding all diffidence, addressed him in a conciliatory manner, in words calculated to gain his confidence and said :—

" From whence springs this anger, O Son of a King? Who has failed to carry out thine orders? What reckless person has

approached the forest where the trees are dry with a flaming torch ?"

Mollified by this soft speech, Lakshmana replied with studied courtesy :—

"Why, given over to lust, does thy consort neglect his duty and his own true interests ? And thou, who art devoted to him, why dost thou not give the matter thy consideration ? He has become indifferent to the affairs of the kingdom and of ourselves and our displeasure. Surrounded by parasites, O Tara, he gives himself up to sensual enjoyments.

"The four months appointed as the term of waiting have passed, but the King of the Monkeys in an orgy of drunkenness and pleasure, is unaware of it. Assuredly dissipation is not a proper means to the observance of one's duty and obligations. Intemperance brings in its train the loss of wealth, virtue and the capacity for enjoyment.

"Not to requite a service received is to fail wholly in one's duty and to lose a good friend is immensely injurious to one's higher interests. From the point of view of prosperity, the greatest of virtues is friendship that is rooted in loyalty and justice ; he who fails in these is not fixed in his duty. This being so, what should therefore be done, O Thou, who art conversant with the path of duty ?"

Hearing these just and reasonable words, expressed with gentleness, Tara assured the prince of the certain fulfilment of his enterprise and again addressed Lakshmana saying :—

"O Son of a King, this is not the time for recrimination, thou shouldst restrain thine anger against my lord ; he has thine interests at heart, forgive his folly, O Warrior.

"O Prince, how can a man endowed with every good quality be indignant with one who is lacking in them ? Which of thine equals, despite his good character, would give way to wrath ? I know the reason for the displeasure of Sugriva's valiant ally, I am conversant with the service that you have both rendered us and which we must return. I know further, O Best of Men, that one must master one's passions. I am aware in what company Sugriva has yielded to lust, which is the cause of the present procrastination that incites thy wrath. When man yields to desire he forgets time and place as also his duty and what should rightfully

be done. Do thou pardon this Leader of the Monkey Race, who, at my side, without shame, gives himself up to sensual enjoyment to which he is the slave. Even the great Rishis, devoted to the practice of asceticism, when carried away by desire, lost control of their minds, how should this monkey, therefore, volatile by nature, when overcome by passion, not become a slave to pleasure, king though he be ? "

Having addressed these words of profound understanding to Lakshmana, whose courage was immeasurable, the gentle Vanari, with a troubled look, on account of her conjugal affection, then added for the good of her lord :—

" O Most Excellent of Men, though overcome by desire, Sugriva has long since made preparation to thine advantage. Already hundreds, thousands and millions of valiant monkeys, able to change their form at will, inhabiting every kind of tree, have come here.

" Be pleased to enter, therefore, O Long-armed Warrior; the chaste conduct of a sincere friend authorizes him to look on the wives of others."

At Tara's invitation and urged by a desire to carry out the commands that had been laid upon him, that illustrious hero, the conqueror of his foes, entered the inner apartment.

There, seated on a golden throne, covered with a rich cloth, he beheld Sugriva, resembling the sun itself, his person decked with celestial ornaments, of a godlike beauty and dignity. Wearing superb raiment and wreaths he looked like Mahendra himself, on every side he was surrounded by women adorned with crowns and jewels meet for goddesses, and his reddened eyes gave him the appearance of Antaka.

Of the hue of fine gold, clasping Ruma firmly in his arms, seated on a magnificent throne, that large-eyed hero saw before him the mighty Saumitri of expansive eyes.

CHAPTER 34

Lakshmana reproaches Sugriva

SEEING that indomitable lion among men, Lakshmana, entering full of wrath, Sugriva was troubled and, observing that Son of Dasaratha breathing heavily and burning with indignation on account of the calamity that had overtaken his brother, the King of the Monkeys rose and, leaving his golden seat that resembled the highly decorated standard of Indra, his eyes inflamed, approached Prince Lakshmana and stood before him like the mighty Kalpa tree.[1] Thereupon the women, lead by Ruma, followed him, like a cluster of stars surrounding the moon.

Then Lakshmana, filled with ire, said to Sugriva standing amidst the women with Ruma at his side, like the moon surrounded by stars :—

" That king who is endowed with great and noble qualities and is compassionate, who has subdued his senses and is grateful and loyal, obtains renown in the world, but the monarch who is rooted in unrighteousness and is unjust to his friends who have rendered him assistance, is the object of opprobrium.

" To utter a falsehood with reference to a horse is to be guilty of the death of a hundred horses, in regard to a cow of a thousand cows, but to utter a falsehood in regard to a man is to destroy one's self as well as one's kindred.

" That ungrateful wretch, who, having gained his end, does not render service for service, is guilty of the murder of all beings, O King of the Plavagas ; this is the text recited by Brahma on beholding one who was guilty of ingratitude ; it is known throughout the world, O Plavamgama. He who kills a cow or drinks intoxicating liquor or is a thief or violates his vow is still able to expiate his sin, but for him who is guilty of ingratitude, no expiation is possible.

" Thou art an ignoble, false and ungrateful wretch, O Monkey, for having obtained what thou didst seek from Rama without requiting his services. Having achieved thy desire through

[1] Kalpa—The Wish-fulfilling tree.

Rama, is it not thy duty to do everything in thy power to recover Sita? Yielding thyself up to sensual delights, untrue to thy promise, Rama does not know thee for the serpent croaking like a frog, that thou art.[1]

"In his compassion for thee, O Wicked Wretch, the magnanimous Rama enabled thee to regain the kingdom of the monkeys. Thou hast failed to acknowledge the benefits conferred on thee by the high-souled Raghava, therefore pierced by sharp arrows thou shalt follow Bali. The path thy brother took at death is not yet closed! Honour thy promise, O Sugriva, do not follow in his wake. Since thou dost not behold the Prince of the Ikshwakus loosing his fiery shafts, thou art still able to remain serene and happy, without concerning thyself about his anxieties."

CHAPTER 35

Tara defends Sugriva

THUS spoke Lakshmana, the son of Sumitra, inflamed with anger and Tara, whose face was as fair as the moon, answered him saying:—

"O Lakshmana, the King of the Monkeys has not merited this harsh language, particularly from thy lips. Sugriva is not ungrateful nor false nor worthy of condemnation nor, O Hero, does he utter what is not true nor is he an impostor!

"The valiant monkey, Sugriva, has not forgotten the assistance rendered to him by Rama on the field of battle, which no other was able to give. With the aid of the magnanimous Rama, Sugriva has regained his glory and the lasting dominion of the monkey realm and has been restored to Ruma and myself once again, O Scourge of thy Foes!

"Having been subject to cruel adversity and now enjoying the summit of good fortune, he has become insensible to the arrival of the time for the fulfilment of his promise, as was the Sage Vishwamitra of old. For ten years, that virtuous Sage was

[1] The meaning being "croaking like a frog to attracts frogs."

attached to the nymph Ghritachi and failed to perceive that time was passing, he, who was skilled in discerning time.[1]

" Sugriva had been deprived of physical pleasures over a long period, he was exhausted and had not experienced any relaxation, O Lakshmana, therefore Rama should pardon him. And thou, O Lakshmana, shouldst not give way to wrath like an inferior person without ascertaining what has taken place. Virtuous people like thee, O Lion among Men, do not give way to immediate and unreasoning anger. In all humility, I appeal to thee on behalf of Sugriva to control the grief that gives rise to this anger in thee. It is my firm conviction that Sugriva is ready to renounce Ruma, Angada, myself, kingdom, wealth, grain and herds to please Rama. Having slain that vile demon, Sugriva will restore Sita to Rama, as the moon is re-united with Rohini.

" In Lanka there are hundreds, thousands and millions of irrepressible demons able to change their shape at will ; without destroying these formidable beings, it is impossible to overcome Ravana, by whom Maithili has been borne away. Sugriva is unable to defeat those demons of terrible exploits without the support of auxiliaries, O Lakshmana. This was Bali's considered opinion, that resourceful and experienced monarch of the monkeys. Knowing nought of the matter, I heard it from his lips.

" In order to render thee assistance, the foremost of the monkeys have been summoned for this enterprise with innumerable carefully selected troops. Awaiting those valiant and powerful monkeys, chosen to assure the success of Rama's undertaking, the King of the Monkeys has not yet left the city.

" O Lakshmana, some time ago Sugriva, wisely ordered that these monkeys should come together this very day. Thousands and millions of bears and hundreds of Golangulas[2] as well as innumerable kotis[3] of monkeys, burning with energy, will be at thy disposal to-day.

" Therefore O Conqueror of Thy Foes, subdue thy wrath. Seeing thy face distorted with anger and thine eyes inflamed,

[1] This story is told in Balakanda.
[2] Golangula—a black monkey with the tail of a cow.
[3] Koti—a crore or ten millions.

the wives of these foremost of monkeys, far from being reassured, are suffering all the anguish of their former fear."

CHAPTER 36

Lakshmana is reconciled to Sugriva

By nature gentle, Lakshmana listened to those just and gracious words of Tara with deference.

Perceiving the magnanimous acceptance of her speech, the King of the Monkeys threw off his fear as one discards wet clothing. Thereafter Sugriva tore off the gaudy and variegated garland from his neck and threw it away, his intoxication being dissipated and that Chief of the Monkeys addressed the redoubtable warrior Lakshmana with humility, thus gratifying him, and said :—

" O Saumitri, I had lost my fortune, my fame and the kingdom of the monkeys which by Rama's favour have been wholly restored to me. Who is able to equal this or render it back even in part to that divine Rama, renowned for his exploits, O Prince? The virtuous Raghava will recover Sita and slay Ravana by his own valour alone ; as for me, I shall merely accompany him. What need of assistance has he who, with a single arrow pierced seven giant trees and a mountain, penetrating deep into the earth ? He by the sound of whose stretching bow the earth with its mountains quakes, what need has he for aid ? I shall follow that Indra among Men, O Lakshmana, when he goes forth to destroy his adversary, Ravana, together with his House.

" If I have betrayed his friendship or confidence in some measure, may he pardon me ; is there any without fault ? "

These words of the magnanimous Sugriva pleased Lakshmana who addressed him affectionately, saying :—

" Assuredly my brother will not lack support, O Prince of the Monkeys, above all, O Sugriva, with thy co-operation, who art full of humility. Such is thy valour and sincerity, that thou art worthy of enjoying the unequalled prosperity of the monkey realm.

" With thine aid, undoubtedly, O Sugriva, the illustrious Rama will soon slay his enemies in battle. Virtuous, mindful of what should be done, intrepid in the field, thou utterest noble words that are worthy of thee, O Friend. Who else, recognizing his fault, at the height of his power, would speak thus, O Bull among the Monkeys, save mine elder brother and thee ?

" Thou art equal to Rama in courage and strength ! Thou has been ordained his ally by the Gods, O Chief of the Monkeys. Why delay further, O Hero, let us go forth together and offer consolation to thy friend, who is afflicted on account of separation from his consort.

" O Sugriva, forgive those reproaches that I addressed to thee on account of Rama's profound distress."

CHAPTER 37

Sugriva assembles his Troops

HEARING the words of the magnanimous Lakshmana, Sugriva said to Hanuman who stood near :—

" Call together all those who inhabit the heights of the Mahendra, Himavat, Vindhya, Kailasha and Mandara mountains, as also those from the peaks of Mt. Pandu and the Five Hills ; those who dwell on the mountains that are bright as the dawn; those who inhabit the furthest shores of the sea in the western region and those on the mountains in the mansions of the sun ; those formidable monkeys who have taken refuge in the Padmachalu woods ; those monkeys resembling clouds of collyrium, who possess the strength of the lord of elephants, who dwell on the Anjana hill ; those possessing the splendour of gold, inhabiting the caves of the Mahashaila mountains and those who frequent the slopes of Mt. Meru, as well as those dwelling on Mt. Dhumra ; those who possess the brilliance of the rising sun, of immense bounds, who, on the Mt. Maharuna, drink the heady wine Maireya ; those who dwell in the vast, fair and fragrant forests with their charming glades, where the ascetics' hermitages are found. With the aid of the fleetest of monkeys summon

them all from every quarter of the world by means of gifts and conciliation, Already I have sent out messengers who are famed for their agility, yet, in order to expedite matters further, let them be followed by other emissaries.

" Bring those leaders of monkeys also, who are lazy or given over to pleasure. If they have not responded to my appeal in ten days, they will suffer the death penalty for infringing the royal command. Let those lions among monkeys under my dominion carry out my orders with all speed in their hundreds, thousands and millions.

" Resembling mountains of mist shrouding the heavens, let those excellent monkeys of terrifying aspect come at my call. Let all the monkeys who are acquainted with the way, scour the earth; call them together at my command with all speed."

At the words of the Monkey King, the Son of the Wind dispatched groups of intelligent monkeys to every quarter. Setting out to that region traversed by Vishnu, by the paths frequented by birds and stars, the monkeys, under the commands of their sovereign set forth immediately.

Scouring the seas, mountains, forests and lakes, they called all the different monkeys together to help Rama. When these monkeys heard of Sugriva's order, a very death warrant, they, in fear, at once set out for Kishkindha.

Those of the Plavagama Tribe, who were as black as collyrium, filled with energy, came from the Mt. Anjana to the number of three kotis to join Rama. Those who frolicked on the high hills, where the sun sets, shining like gold, offered themselves in ten kotis. From the heights of Mt. Kailasha, monkeys whose colour resembled a lion's mane, came to the number of a thousand and those who lived on fruit and roots, who dwelt on Himavat came in tens of millions, whilst those terrible apes of fearful deeds, resembling burning coals, descended in haste from the Vindhya mountain in thousands of millions. Those who dwelt on the shores of the white sea, the dwellers of the Tamala forests and those who fed on coconuts could not be numbered.

From woods, caves and rivers, a vast army of monkeys issued forth, who seemed able to drink up the sun's rays. Now those mighty monkeys, who had gone out in all haste to spur others on,

found a great tree growing on the summit of Mt. Himavat. In ancient times on that divine and sacred peak, a great sacrifice had been performed which found favour with Mahadeva, who satisfies all the desires of the Gods. Thereafter many varieties of fruit and roots resembling ambrosia had sprung up in that quarter from the sacred offerings of grain and seed,[1] and those who partook of them had no need of further sustenance for the period of a whole month.

Then those foremost among the monkeys gathered those celestial fruits and roots with medicinal herbs from that place of sacrifice and they brought fragrant flowers also to please Sugriva.

Having called all the monkeys of the world together, those chosen messengers returned with speed at the head of their troops and soon those fleet and spirited monkeys had returned to Kishkindha, where Sugriva was; and they presented him with the fruit, herbs and roots that they had gathered, saying :—

" We have scoured the mountains, rivers and forests ; all the monkeys of the earth have come at thy call."

These words pleased Sugriva, the King of the Monkey Tribe, who freely accepted all the gifts they had brought.

CHAPTER 38

Sugriva goes to meet Rama

SUGRIVA, having accepted the gifts presented to him, thanked the monkeys and dismissed them all.

Having sent away those thousands of monkeys, who had performed their task, he deemed his mission, as that of the mighty Raghava, well nigh accomplished.

Thereupon Lakshmana addressed the redoubtable Sugriva, the foremost of monkeys, with a deference which moved him, saying :—" O Friend, be pleased to set out from Kishkindha."

[1] That had been scattered there.

Hearing these words spoken by Shri Lakshmana, Sugriva filled with joy answered :—" Be it so, let us go forward, I am at thy command."

Having thus spoken to the illustrious Lakshmana, Sugriva dismissed Tara with the other women and thereafter summoning the leaders of the monkeys in a loud voice addressed them, saying :—" Come hither ! "

At the sound of his voice all those admitted to the presence of women came immediately and stood with joined palms before the king, whose brilliance equalled the sun's and who said to them :—

" Go with all speed and bring a litter, O Monkeys ! " At this command they set out with rapid strides to seek that marvellous litter and, when it was made ready, the supreme Sovereign of the Monkeys said to Saumitri :—" Be pleased to ascend the litter. O Lakshmana ! "

Speaking thus, Sugriva with Lakshmana mounted the golden litter that shone like the sun and was supported by a large number of monkeys. A white canopy was spread over Sugriva's head and magnificent fans made of yaks tails were waved about him. Eulogized by bards, to the sound of conches and trumpets, he set out in regal state. Surrounded by hundreds of war-like monkeys bearing weapons in their hands he proceeded to the place where Rama dwelt and, having arrived at that excellent spot, that illustrious prince descended from the litter with Lakshmana and approached Rama with joined palms. Then the monkeys, grouped about him, did likewise and, seeing that great army of monkeys resembling a lake covered with lotus buds, Rama was well pleased with Sugriva.

Raising the King of the Monkeys, who had prostrated himself before him and whose forehead touched his feet, the virtuous Rama embraced him to demonstrate his affection and esteem and requested him to be seated. Thereafter seeing him seated on the ground, Rama said :—

" He who divides his time judiciously between duty, pleasure and the legitimate acquisition of wealth and honours his responsibilities in these things is truly a king, O Best of Monkeys ; but he who neglects his duty, his true interests and legitimate pleasures is like one who sleeps on the top of a tree and does not

wake up till he has fallen. The monarch who is ever ready to destroy his foes and delights in showing favour to his friends, who plucks the fruit of the threefold food,[1] has fulfilled his duty.

"The time has now come to act, O Scourge of Thy Foes, therefore take counsel with thy ministers, O King of the Apes!"

Thus addressed, Sugriva answered Rama, saying:—"I had lost fame and fortune together with the entire monkey realm, O Long-armed Warrior but, through thy favour have received them again by thine and thy brother's grace, O Great One, O Greatest of the Conquerors. He who does not acknowledge a service done to him is an object of contempt.

"These energetic leaders have gone out in their hundreds to summon all the monkeys in the world, O Slayer of thy Foes. Monkeys, bears and apes full of valour, of ferocious aspect, familiar with the woods and inaccessible forests, monkeys that are born of the Gods and Gandharvas, able to change their shape at will, are on their way followed by their troops, O Rama.

"These monkeys are proceeding here surrounded by hundreds and thousands,[2] by millions and tens of millions; these monkeys and their chiefs, who are as valiant as Mahendra and resemble mountains in stature, are coming together from the Meru and Vindhya ranges. They will unite with thee to fight the demon Ravana and, laying him low on the battlefield, will restore Sita to thee."

Seeing the preparations made by that valiant monkey, in accord with his desire, the illustrious prince was delighted and his countenance resembled the blue lotus in flower.

[1] The three ends of life, duty, wealth and legitimate pleasures.

[2] Lit. Arvuda—a hundred millions.
Sanku—is a thousand Arvudas.
Madhya is an Arvuda ten times; Antya is a Madhya ten times; Samudra is a Madhya twenty times and a Paradha a Samudra thirty times.

CHAPTER 39

The Arrival of Sugriva's Forces

THUS spoke Sugriva, standing with joined palms before Rama, and that most virtuous of men, taking him in his arms, embraced him saying :—" It is no wonder that Indra sends the rain, nor that the sun with its thousand rays dispels the darkness from the sky, O My dear One, nor that the moon by its brilliance makes the night clear, nor that thine equals create the happiness of their friends, O Scourge of Thy Foes. To find nobility of character in thee is not strange ; I know thee by the affectionate tenor of thy speech. With thy support, O My Friend, I shall vanquish all my foes on the battlefield ; thou art mine ally and shouldst assist me.

" To his own destruction, did that vile demon bear Maithili away, as Anuhlada[1] carried away Sachi, having first deceived her sire.[2] Ere long, I shall pierce Ravana with my sharp arrows as Shatakratu, that slayer of his enemies, slew the haughty father of Paulomi."

At that moment, darkness covered the firmament and veiled the fiery brilliance of that orb of a thousand rays ; a pall of dust hung over all regions, and the earth with its mountains, forests and woods trembled. The entire earth was covered with innumerable monkeys resembling kings of men and who, having sharp teeth, were gifted with great strength. In the twinkling of an eye, those foremost of monkeys surrounded by troops, numbering hundreds of kotis, endowed with extreme energy, roaring like thunder, gathered from the rivers, mountains and seas with others who inhabited the forests.

Monkeys the colour of the rising sun or white like the moon or of the tint of lotus stamens or pale, having their home on the golden mountain, appeared in tens of thousands in attendance on that renowned and valiant monkey Shatavali. Then the puissant

[1] Anuhlada—A son of Hiranya-kasipu, a Daitya, father of Prahlada. His story is to be found in the Puranas.

[2] Puloman—a Danava who was slain by Indra when he attempted to curse him for ravishing his daughter Sachi.

sire of Tara, who resembled a golden hill, appeared at the head of many thousand kotis. Thereafter the father of Ruma, father-in-law of Sugriva, who resembled the filaments of a lotus and was like a youthful sun, arrived accompanied by other thousands of kotis of monkeys; and that foremost of monkeys, Kesharin, Hanuman's illustrious sire, appeared in company with many thousands of monkeys. And Gavaksha, King of the Golangulas, endowed with dreadful power came, surrounded by millions of monkeys; Dhumra also, the destroyer of his foes, advanced with two thousand bears endowed with terrific speed. Thereafter the leader of herds, Panasha of exceeding prowess came, accompanied by three million mighty and dreadful warriors and he was followed by Nila of immense stature, who resembled a mass of collyrium, with ten kotis of monkeys. And bright as a golden mountain, the heroic Gavaya arrived with five kotis of monkeys, and in his devotion to Sugriva the brave chief Darimukha brought a thousand kotis. Thereafter the two powerful Ashwiputras, Mainda and Dvivida presented themselves with a thousand million monkeys. The brave warrior Gaja conducted an army of three kotis of monkeys, and the illustrious king of the bears, called Jambavan, came at the head of ten kotis, placing himself under Sugriva's command. The renowned Rumana followed with a hundred kotis of intrepid monkeys in all haste. A hundred thousand million monkeys followed Gandhamadana, and an infinite number were under the command of Prince Angada, who, like his father, was full of courage. Thereafter, shining like a star, came Tara of supreme valour, accompanied by five kotis of monkeys from a great distance and there followed Indrajanu, a brave and skilful general, who in his turn presented himself at the head of eleven kotis, and also Rambha with an ayuta[1] of soldiers; and there followed the monkey leader Durmukha, that valiant one full of phenomenal courage, with two kotis of monkeys, resembling the peaks of Mt. Kailasha. Hanuman himself was accompanied by thousands of monkeys and the supremely brave Nala was followed by the inhabitants of the woods to the number of an hundred, a thousand and an hundred monkeys. The fortunate Darimukha was escorted by ten kotis of monkeys and with loud shouts took his place beside

[1] Ayuta—Ten thousand, a myriad or a number not to be counted.

Sugriva. And Sharabha, Kumuda, Vahni and Rambha came, those monkeys who were able to change their shape at will, with their forces of incalculable numbers covering the entire earth, its mountains and forests. All the monkeys inhabiting the earth gathered round Sugriva, leaping, gambolling and roaring, and those Plavagamas surrounded Sugriva like massed clouds round the sun. Full of courage and energy, they gave voice to repeated shouts of acclamation, bowing their heads in salutation to the King of Monkeys. Others, the leaders of armies, according to tradition, approached the king and stood by his side with joined palms; and Sugriva standing in extreme devotion before Rama, informed him of the arrival of the monkeys and then addressed his generals, who were burning with zeal, saying:—" O Chiefs of Monkeys, station your forces duly on the mountain near rills in the woods and let each ascertain the exact number of his troops."

CHAPTER 40

Sugriva sends his Monkeys to the East in search of Sita

THEN the Lord of the Monkeys, his purpose accomplished, said to that lion among men, Rama, the destroyer of hostile hosts :—

" Here, gathered together, are the foremost of monkeys inhabiting my dominions, who are equal to Mahendra and are able to transport themselves anywhere at will. These ferocious monkeys, resembling giants and titans, of immeasurable prowess, renowned for their exploits, bellicose, valiant, indefatigable and supremely sagacious in all their deliberations, have come with their vast forces.

" O Rama, these untold millions, who inhabit various mountain tracts, traversing land and sea, have come to place themselves at thy service. All are intent on their master's welfare and obedient to thy behests ; they are at thy command, it is for thee to dispose of them as thou wilt. Though I am fully conversant with thy design, yet do thou order all as thou judgest best."

Thus spoke Sugriva and Rama, the son of Dasaratha, taking him in his arms, said to him :—

" O Dear and Wise Friend, let us learn if Sita still lives or no and ascertain in what country Ravana dwells. Then, having come to where Videha's daughter is to be found, we will adopt those measures that circumstances dictate, the hour having been fixed.

" O Lord of the Monkeys, it is not for me to command this expedition nor for Lakshmana; it is thou who must direct it; thou shalt be its leader. Do thou, O Lord, take the command thyself in this matter, thou art fully acquainted with my purpose, O Hero. Thou, the second of my friends,[1] art full of courage, wise, knowing how to choose the fitting moment, devoted to my true interests, supremely loyal and accomplished."

Thus addressed, Sugriva, in the presence of Rama and the sagacious Lakshmana, said to his general, Vinata, who resembled a great hill and whose voice resounded like thunder :—

" O Foremost of Leaders, who art accompanied by monkeys as bright as the sun and moon, thou art able to turn time and place to advantage and art skilled in conducting thine affairs ! Taking with thee hundreds and thousands of apes, explore the eastern region with its forests, woods and mountains, in search of Sita, the Princess of Videha and also Ravana's stronghold. Search among the mountain fastnesses, the forests and rivers for Rama's beloved consort, the daughter-in-law of King Dasaratha ; search by the beautiful Bhagirathi, the Sarayu, the Kaushiki and the Kalindi, the enchanting Yamuna and the great hills bordering the Saraswati, the Sindhu and the Shona of ruby waters, the Mahi and Kalamahi with their splendid wooded hills.

" Look for them in the Brahmamalas, Videhas, Malavana, Kashikoshalas, and Magadhas, the Pundras and Angas, lands where the silkworm and silver mines abound and on the mountains and cities skirting the sea. Search through the houses in Mandara, amongst those people whose ears resemble cloths reaching to their nether lip, whose faces are black and dreadful, who are one-footed, though fleet withal, and whose bodies do not deteriorate ; those also who feed on human flesh, and the Kiratas, hunters who are golden-hued, of pleasing

[1] The first being Lakshmana.

looks, possessing thick hair worn in a knot, who subsist on raw fish and those creatures, tiger-men, terrible to behold.

" O Dwellers in the woods, search carefully in all these places that are accessible by climbing and swimming and the Island of the Seven Kingdoms Yava, also and the islands Suvarna and Rupayaka, full of gold mines, called the gold and silver islands. Beyond these, is the mountain Shishira, whose peaks reach to the heavens, and which is inhabited by Gods and Giants. Seek here in the mountain fastnesses, cascades and forests for the glorious consort of Rama.

" Thereafter you will reach the red and swiftly flowing river Shona ; from there descend to the seashore, where the Siddhas and Charanas dwell. In these enchanting sacred spots, seek everywhere for Ravana and Sita. Explore the forests, mountain sprung rivers, wild tracts and cavernous heights. It behoves you to examine the terrible islands in the ocean, where great waves arise and, whipped by the tempest, let forth a thunderous roar. There dwell Asuras of immense size, who by Brahma's permission, seize the shadows of birds flying over the sea. Arriving at that vast ocean, that resounds like clouds at the time of the dissolution of the universe, frequented by huge serpents, keep careful watch and crossing over that sea, called Lohita, whose red waters are terrible to behold, you will come upon the mighty knarled Shamali tree. There, constructed by Vishwakarma, like unto Mt. Kailasha, decorated with every kind of gem, towereth the abode of Garuda. Terrible demons resembling hills of diverse forms, named Mandehas, hang suspended from the rocks there. Day after day, at the rising of the sun, those demons tormented by that planet, fall into the water, struck by Brahma's energy and then suspend themselves on the rocks once more.

" Proceeding further, you will come to the sea, named Kshiroda, that resembles a white cloud with its waves shining like a necklace of pearls. In its centre rises the great white mountain Rishabha, planted with trees, bearing fragrant blossoms and a lake named Sudarshana covered with dazzling silver lotuses having golden stamens, where flamingoes abound. Vibudhas, Charanas, Yakshas and Kinneras in the company of troops of Apsaras, disport themselves on the shore of that lake.

"Leaving the Kshiroda Sea behind, O Warriors, you will come to the Jalada sea which is a source of terror to all beings. There the Rishi Aurva[1] created a shining object by the power of his anger, which was transformed into the head of a horse by Brahma. Its heat is unequalled and its food is the universe of movable and immovable beings. There the cries of the creatures of the sea, who are unable to bear the flames, can be heard wailing in its vicinity.

"To the north of the Svadu Sea rises the high mountain Jatarupashila, covering thirteen yojanas, of the splendour of gold. There, O Monkeys, you will behold the supporters of the earth, the serpent resembling the moon, with eyes as large as lotus petals, worshipped by the Gods, and possessing a thousand heads, the divine Ananta of dark hue sleeping on the summit of the mountain. There stands a golden palm tree with three branches resembling a standard set upon an altar. This is the boundary of the Eastern region set up by the Gods.

"Reaching up to the heavens, measuring a hundred yojanas, the mountain, Udaya, rises with its golden peak, beautiful with its Sala, Tamala and flowering Karnikara trees bright as the sun.

"There also is the peak Saumanasa four miles in breadth and forty in height. From there in former days, Vishnu, the supreme Lord, measured the earth with three strides, the second being Mt. Meru.

"The sun passing from Jambudwipa on the north and reaching the summit of Saumanasa, again becomes visible to the dwellers in Jambudwipa. It is there that the great Rishis, Vaikhanasas, bright as the sun, perform their austerities.

"This is the island Sudarshana, where the sun rises, giving light to all beings. Search for Janaki and Ravana on these mountain fastnesses and in the forests and woods. Here, when the sun shines on the Shaila mountain, the east appears roseate. Because the sun rises there, Brahma established it, in ancient times, as the gateway of the world, called the East.

[1] A miraculously born sage who castigated the warrior class, but on the persuasion of his ancestors, cast his anger into the sea, where it assumed the form of a being with a horse's head.

In other versions it was said to be the subterranean fire that consumes the world at the end of the cycle and is represented as a flame with a horse's head.

Here you should look for Sita and Ravana on the mountain breast, in the caves and by the waterfalls.

" Beyond is the impassable eastern quarter inhabited by the Gods, bereft of sun and moon, covered by darkness. Search for the princess in all those rocks, woods and streams that I have made known to you, but, O Foremost of Monkeys, you are only able to proceed thus far. Beyond is the region without sun or bourne of which I have no knowledge. Proceeding in search of Vaidehi and Ravana's abode, having reached the mountain Udaya, return, when a full month shall have passed. Do not exceed the period ; he who does so, will be punished by death.

" Having attained your end, and met with Maithili and with care explored the favourite region of Mahendra, which is covered with woods and thickets, return satisfied."

CHAPTER 41

Sugriva sends out other Monkeys to explore the Southern Region

THEN having sent away that mighty host of monkeys to the east, Sugriva dispatched another well tried army to the south.

Appointing Angada leader of those heroic monkeys, that hero, the lord of the monkey bands, conversant with the countries that had to be explored, sent out those endowed with speed and valour : Nila, the Son of Agni, and the monkey Hanuman, the exceedingly energetic Jambavan, Suhotra and Sharari, Sharagulma, Gaja, Gavaksha, Gavaya, Sushena, Vrishabha, Mainda, Dvivida, Gandhamadana, Ulkamukha and Ananga, the two sons of Hutashana.

And the King of the Monkeys began to describe those regions that were difficult of access to those simian chiefs, saying :—

" You will first behold the Vindhya ranges, possessing a hundred peaks covered with trees and shrubs of every kind, and the enchanting river, Narmada, frequented by mighty serpents, and the wide and charming stream, Godavari, with its dark reeds, and the captivating Krishnaveni ; the regions of Mekhalas and Utkala and the city of Dasharna also ; Abravanti and Avanti,

Vidarbhas and Nishtikas and the charming Mahishakas. You will see too, the Matsyas, Kalingas and Kaushikas, where you should search for the princess and the Dandaka Forest with its mountains, rivers and caverns and the Godavari, also examine the districts of Andhras, Paundras, the Cholas, Pandyas and Keralas. Then repair to the Ayomukha Mountain, rich in ore, with its marvellous peaks and flowering woodlands; that mountain, possessing lovely forests of sandalwood, should be carefully searched by you.

" Thereafter you will behold that divine river of pure waters, the Kaveri, rendered gay by troups of Apsaras. On the summit of the mighty Mountain Malaya, bright as the sun, you will behold Agastya, the foremost of Rishis. By the permission of that high-souled one, you will cross over the great river, Tamraparni, abounding in crocodiles. Ravishing forests of sandalwood cover the islands of these waters flowing to the sea, which resemble a youthful bride going to meet her lover.

" Proceeding further, O Monkeys, you will see the golden gates set with pearls of the city of the Pandyas; then in order to ensure the success of your enterprise, you will approach the sea and ascertain your ability for crossing it. In the centre of the ocean, Agastya has set that foremost of mountains, Mahendra, its slopes covered with trees. Entirely made of gold it extends deep down into the waters; the abode of Gods, Rishis, Yakshas and Apsaras, thronged by innumerable Siddhas and Charanas and of surpassing loveliness, it is visited by the thousand-eyed God at each new moon.

" On the other side of the sea is an island, four hundred miles in length, inaccessible to men and splendid to look upon; search there with particular care, it is the abode of the wicked Ravana, who merits death, the Lord of the Titans, in splendour equal to Indra himself.

" In the middle of the ocean dwells the female titan named Angaraka, who procures her prey by seizing the shadow of those who fly in the air. Your doubts at rest, search there for the consort of that king of men whose glory is limitless.

" Beyond that island in the sea there rises a lovely hill on which Celestial Beings dwell, named Pushpitaka, bright as the rays of sun or moon, lapped by the waves of the ocean, whose peaks

seem to pierce the heavens. Of these, one all golden, on which the day's orb lingers, the ungrateful and the unbeliever may not behold. Inclining your heads to that peak, offer salutations and search on. After this you will come to another mountain, difficult of access, named Suryavan extending over fourteen yojanas and, beyond this, the mountain Vaidyuta, ever green, with trees bearing every desirable fruit in all seasons. Partaking of these delectable fruit and roots and drinking the honey, pass on, O Monkeys.

" Beyond there is the Mountain Kunjara which delights the eye and heart, where Vishwakarma constructed the abode of Agastya. Extending over four miles, this stately golden edifice adorned with many kinds of gems rises to the height of ten yojanas. There also is the city of Bhogavati, the abode of the Serpent Race, with spacious streets, incapable of being captured, guarded by formidable snakes and sharp-toothed highly-poisonous serpents, where the dread King of the Serpents, Vasuki, dwells. Search that city with care in every hidden place wheresoever it may be.

" Going beyond, you will find the beautiful Rishabha Mountain in the form of a bull, filled with gems where excellent Goshiraka, Padmaka, and Harishyama trees and those possessing the brilliance of fire are seen. Approaching the sandalwood forest by no means should you enter there, for a certain Gandharva, named Rohita, protects it with five other Celestial Beings resplendent as the sun, named Shailusha, Gramani, Shiksha, Shuka and Rabhru.

" Thereafter you will see the retreat of those ascetics, whose splendour resembles the sun, moon and fire ; this is the end of the earth where those who have won the heavenly regions, dwell. Beyond is the dread abode of the Pitris, which is inaccessible. There Death has his city, enveloped in abysmal gloom, O Bulls among Monkeys. Pursue your explorations thus far ; but those who go beyond never return.

" Having searched all those regions which are accessible to you, seeking for some trace of the princess, he who shall return within a month saying ' I have seen Sita ' will pass his days in happiness, enjoying prosperity equal to mine, in the midst of every delight. None will be dearer to me ; I shall cherish him

as a relative and, however great the number of his faults, he will become my friend.

"Your strength and vigour are immeasurable and you are born in families endowed with great qualities; strive manfully therefore to find the princess; set forth on this mission of supreme importance and demonstrate your heroism."

CHAPTER 42

Other Monkeys are sent to explore the Western Region

HAVING despatched those monkeys in a southerly direction, Sugriva, addressing the leader, Sushena, who resembled a cloud, with bent head and joined palms approached his father-in-law, Tara's sire, who was endowed with great prowess, and spoke to him also. Then he issued orders to Maricha, the son of Maharshi and the mighty ape, Archismat, surrounded by the foremost of monkeys, possessing the splendour of Mahendra and like unto Vainateya in brilliance, and also to Maricha's offspring, the Marichas, the mighty Archirmalayas, that all these sons of the ascetic[1] should march towards the region of the West, saying:—

"O Ye Monkey Chiefs, let two hundred thousand monkeys, led by Sushena, set out in search of Vaidehi! Scour the countries of the Saurashtras, the Bahlikas and Chandrachitras abounding in antimony and other provinces and populous places and fair and pleasant cities and Kukshi, dense with Punnaga trees and filled with Bakula and Uddalaka trees, as well as the tracts covered with Ketakas and the auspicious streams whose cool waters flow towards the west.

"Explore the forest of the ascetics and the mountain woodlands; there, having searched the tracts resembling deserts, the towering cliffs and the mountain ranges, extremely difficult of access, proceed further, when you will behold the sea, which abounds in whales and crocodiles, O Monkeys.

[1] Marichi.

"Then the apes shall disport themselves amidst the groves covered with Ketakas and dense with Tamala and coconut trees. Look for Sita and Ravana's stronghold there, in hills and woods, on the shores of the sea and explore Murachipattana and the delightful cities of Jatapura, Avanti and Angalapa as also the forest of Alakshita and all these spacious kingdoms.

"There, where the river Sindhu joins the ocean, is a high mountain named Somagiri, possessing a hundred peaks and covered with tall trees. On its slopes dwell the Sinhas[1] who carry whales and elephants to their nests. These are found on the mountain ridges and on the extensive plateaus, where wild elephants range, gratified with food, whose trumpeting resembles the roar of thunder. The monkeys, able to change their shape at will, should scour that golden summit, towering to the sky and covered with graceful trees.

"In the middle of the sea rises the golden summit of the Mountain Pariyatra, extending over a hundred yojanas. There dwell thousands of powerful Gandharvas, effulgent as fire, formidable and mischievous, resembling flames. O Valiant Monkeys, do not approach them nor seek to eat the fruits from that region. These fruit trees are guarded with ferocious vigilance by those mighty Gandharvas, nevertheless you should search for Janaki there, nor have you ought to fear if you preserve your monkey form.

"There is a mighty hill, the colour of emerald, shining like a diamond, named Vajra, covered with trees and creepers, an hundred yojanas in height and area; carefully search all the caves of that mountain.

"In the fourth quarter of the ocean is the Mt. Charavat; there Vishwakarma forged the discus Sahasrara, which together with the conch was taken possession of by Shri Vishnu when he had slain Panchajana and the Danava Hayagriva. In those deep caverns and amidst those charming slopes, search for Ravana and Videha's daughter with care.

"Beyond, rising from the depths of the sea, is the mighty mountain, Varaha with its peak of pure gold which measures four and sixty yojanas. On it is the golden city named Pragjyotisha where the giant, Naraka, dwells. There do you

[1] Lit. "Flying lions," possibly eagles or prehistoric birds.

search for Ravana and Vaidehi among the beautiful plateaus and huge caves.

"Passing beyond that foremost of mountains, revealing glimpses of the gold in its depths, you will come to the Mountain Sarvasauvarna with its many fountains and waterfalls; there elephants, wild boar, lions and tigers roar ceaselessly on every side, filling it with their clamour day and night. Then there is the mountain named Megha where the Gods crowned the fortunate Mahendra, he of the bay horses, the Vanquisher of Paka. Having passed that mountain protected by Mahendra, you should repair to a range of sixty thousand golden hills, bright as the rising sun, casting their light on every side and embellished with blossoming golden trees. In their midst rises the monarch of mountains, Meru, the foremost of hills, on whom Aditya, well pleased, conferred a boon saying:—

"'By my grace all the mountains under thy protection shall be golden by night and day and those Gods who inhabit thee, the Gandharvas and Danavas, shall both assume the radiance of gold.'

"At dusk, the Vishwadevas, the Vasus, the Maruts and the Celestials gather to adore the Sun-god and worshipped by them the sun sinks below the horizon traversing forty thousand miles in the space of an hour, when it withdraws behind the mountain range. On the summit of that mountain rises a palace resembling the sun in splendour, consisting of countless towers, which was built by Vishwakarma and is graced by various trees filled with birds. It is the abode of the magnanimous Varuna, who bears the noose in his hand.

"Between the Meru mountain and the Astachala Range there is a great Tala tree with ten crests, made of pure gold, which shines with extreme brilliance on a marvellous base. Search all the inaccessible places on this mountain, as well as the lakes and rivers for Ravana and Vaidehi.

"It is there that the virtuous Merusavarni dwells, sanctified by his asceticism and equal to Brahma himself. Bowing down, you should make enquiries of the Maharishi Merusavarni, who resembles the sun, concerning Mithila's daughter.

"From the end of the night, all those regions, that the sun illumines till it sets behind the Astachala mountains, should be

searched by you, O Bulls among the Monkeys, but of that which lies beyond which is covered in darkness and without bourne, we know nought!

"Search for Sita and Ravana in this region as far as the Astachala Mountain and at the end of a month, return; those who tarry beyond this term will die. My father-in-law of long arms gifted with great prowess, I appoint as your leader; you should abide by his commands and listen to all he says; he is my spiritual preceptor. All of you are valorous and well able to ascertain the wisdom of a course, still you will be doing your duty in accepting him as your leader. In this wise, explore the western quarter. Having requited the good that has been done to us, we shall attain our end. Do you also determine what is pleasing to Rama and, in accord with time and place, execute it."

Then those monkeys and their leaders with Sushena at their head, having given a due hearing to the wise counsel delivered by Sugriva, offered salutations to him and set out for the quarter protected by Varuna.

CHAPTER 43

Searchers are sent to the Northern Region

HAVING directed his father-in-law to the western region, the Lord of the Apes spoke to that heroic monkey Shatavali, in words fraught with his own and Rama's interests:—"With an escort of a hundred thousand rangers of the woods, the sons of Vaivasvat and thy counsellors, do thou explore the northern region, O Hero, which is crowned with the snowy peaks of Himalaya, and search everywhere for Rama's illustrious consort there.

"O Most Circumspect of Beings, having executed this task and done that which is pleasing to the son of Dasaratha, we shall have honoured our obligation and achieved success. The magnanimous Raghava has rendered us a great service and, if we can make some return, our life will not have been lived in vain. To render assistance to any in need is to make one's life

fruitful, even if one is under no obligation to do so; how much more if one is able to repay one's benefactor. Reflecting on this, those who value our well-being and happiness should do all in their power to discover Janaki.

"Rama, the foremost of men, revered by all beings, the conqueror of hostile citadels, is united with us in friendship. Endowed with courage and discrimination, do you explore these numerous and dangerous regions, rivers and mountains.

"Search the lands of the Mlecchas, Pulindas, Shurasenas, Prasthalas, Bharatas, Kurus, Madrakas, Kambojas and Yavanas. The cities of Shakas should be visited by you as well as the Varadas, thereafter do you explore Himavat. In the tracts of Lodhras and Padmakas and in the Devadaru woods, search on every side for Ravana and Vaidehi. Reaching the Soma hermitage, frequented by Devas and Gandharvas, proceed to the mountain named Kala, possessing spacious plateaus. In the midst of these mountainous tracts, in the valleys and caverns search for that illustrious lady, Rama's irreproachable consort. Having traversed that golden breasted mountain, you should scale Mt. Sudarshana and further Mt. Devasakha, the refuge of birds, filled with every variety of winged creature and covered with trees of differing fragrance. Amidst its golden rocks, fountains and caves, search for Ravana and Videha's daughter.

Going beyond this mountain, you will come upon an open space, measuring four hundred miles in extent, devoid of mountains, rivers and trees, nor are any living beings to be found there. Speedily traversing this desert you will reach the stainless Kailasha Mountain which will fill you with delight. There, resembling a pale cloud, you will see the charming domain of Kuvera, of burnished gold, constructed by Vishwakarma, where lies a great lake covered with flowering lotuses and lilies, frequented by swans and ducks, where troops of Apsaras disport themselves. There the King Vaishravana, adored by the whole world, the gracious dispenser of riches, sports with the Guhyakas[1]. Amidst these mountains, bright as the moon, as also in the caverns, search carefully for Ravana and Sita.

[1] Hidden Beings attendants on Kuvera.

Coming to Mt. Krauncha, with exceeding circumspection, enter its inaccessible caverns, which are well known to be extremely hard to penetrate. There dwell certain great and illustrious Rishis, effulgent as the sun, adored by the Gods, whose forms they assume. You should explore the other caves, plateaus and peaks of the Krauncha Mountain thoroughly. Then the tree-less Manasa peak will be seen, the abode of birds, and the scene of Kama's austerities, where no way for any creature, God or Titan exists; this mountain should also be searched by you. Beyond this is the Mainaka Mountain where the great giant Maya has built his abode; this place with its plateaus, plains and woods must also be searched by you. Women with the faces of horses dwell there.

" Going beyond there, you will reach the abode of the Siddhas, where the ascetics—Valakhilyas and Vaikhanasas are. Pay obeisance to those great beings, whose austerities have cleansed them from all sin and, in humility, enquire of them concerning Sita. There is the Vaikhanasa lake covered with golden lotuses, the resort of beautiful swans, bright as the dawn. The elephant of Kuvera, Sarvabhauma by name, in the company of she-elephants, wanders about in that region.

" Beyond that lake is a sky bereft of moon, sun, stars and clouds but it is illumined as if by so many solar rays, through the effulgence of god-like Sages crowned by asceticism, who rest there. Leaving that region behind, you come to the river Shailoda, on whose banks the Kichaka reeds grow, by the help of which the Siddhas cross to and fro. There are the Uttara Kurus, with whom those who have acquired spiritual merit take refuge. There are lakes there, whose waters are covered with golden lotuses and innumerable rivers abounding in dark green leaves and pools of the hue of the rising sun, embellished by clumps of crimson lotuses. Pearls and gems of great price and masses of blue flowers possessing golden stamens cover those tracts and rivers with floating islets, where gold abounds and high banks scattered with precious stones, are seen. The trees there, thronged with birds, bear fruit and flowers at all seasons, charged with delectable juices and distilling delicious perfumes, fulfilling every desire. Other excellent trees give rich attire of different kinds and ornaments of pearls, emeralds and other

gems desired by men and women; some also bear fruit which can be partaken of in every season. Some trees bring forth precious couches bedecked with costly and variegated coverlets and others furnish enchanting garlands, costly drinks and various kinds of viands. Women possessed of every accomplishment distinguished for their youth and beauty, are there, sporting with Gandharvas, Kinneras, Siddhas, Nagas, and Vidyadharas of great splendour; and all those of righteous deeds engaged in pleasure and those who enjoy what is pleasant and useful, sojourn there with their wives.

" There the continual sound of musical instruments, blended with sweet laughter, is heard, giving delight to all beings: there is none there who is not happy or wants for any desirable object and every day the enchantment of that place increases.

" Beyond that region is the Northern Sea. There in the bosom of the deep rises the Somagiri Mountain of immense size. Though bereft of the sun, yet on account of the brilliance of the Soma mountain, that land is as bright as if Vivasvat himself had warmed it with his luminous rays. There dwells the Soul of the universe, Shambhuinin, in his cosmic form as the eleven Rudras surrounded by Brahmarishis.

" O Foremost of Monkeys, you should not venture beyond the region of the Uttara Kurus, nor is there any way for creatures to do so. That mountain, named Soma, is incapable of being scaled, even by the Gods. Sighting this mountain, turn back speedily. You may proceed so far, O Foremost of Monkeys, but the region beyond, where unending night broods, is unknown to us.

" You should search all those places, which I have described to you, and also those I have omitted to mention. O You who are equal to the wind and fire, by discovering the place of concealment of Videha's daughter, you will be doing what is exceedingly pleasing to the son of Dasaratha as well as to me! Having achieved your purpose, do you with your relatives, honoured by me and having acquired every distinction, your enemies slain, range the earth, the support of all beings, O Monkeys."

CHAPTER 44

Rama gives his Ring to Hanuman

SUGRIVA disclosed his plan to Hanuman in particular, being supremely confident that this leader, the foremost of monkeys, would accomplish his purpose.

Then the monkey king, the lord of all the dwellers in the woods, well pleased, addressed the son of the Wind-God, the peerless Hanuman, saying :—" Nowhere on the earth, in the air or sky, in the celestial regions or in the depths of the sea, do I know of any obstacle that can impede thy course, O Best of Monkeys! All the worlds with the Asuras, Gandharvas, Nagas, Men and Gods, as well as the mountains and the seas are well known to thee. In motion, speed, skill and energy thou art the equal of thy sire, O Valiant One, and there exists no creature on this earth that is like thee in vigour, O Hero of infinite resource! Reflect therefore on how Sita may be found! In thee, O Hanuman, repose strength, wit, courage and policy in conjunction with the knowledge of time and place."

Realizing that success in the venture depended on Hanuman and that Hanuman himself was chosen on account of his exploits, Rama reflected: " This Lord of the Monkeys has supreme confidence in Hanuman and Hanuman too is sure of success; he who has been tested by his deeds and who is considered worthiest by his master is certain to accomplish his purpose."

Thereupon that mighty warrior, Rama, considering that his ends were already gained, felt a great felicity flooding his mind and heart and that scourge of his enemies, highly gratified, gave Hanuman a ring inscribed with his name that would be a sign to the princess and said to him :—

" O Foremost of Monkeys, by this token, the daughter of Janaka will not fail to recognize thee as my messenger. O Warrior, thy resolution, thy courage and thine experience as also Sugriva's words seem to me to predict success."

Thereupon, taking the ring and placing it to his forehead, that foremost of monkeys, offering obeisance to the feet of Rama, prepared to depart. Taking with him a mighty band of monkeys, that hero, the son of Pavana, resembling the moon in a cloudless sky encircled by stars, set forth.

And Rama addressed that mighty warrior saying :—" O Thou endowed with the strength of a lion, I depend on thy valour ; by summoning up thy great resources, do all in thy power, O Son of the Wind, O Hanuman, to bring back the daughter of Janaka."

CHAPTER 45

The Departure of the Monkeys

SUMMONING all the monkeys, the Lord of the Apes, Sugriva, spoke to them touching the success of Rama's enterprise, and said :—

" O Chiefs of the Monkeys, knowing my commands, go forth and search those regions indicated by me." Whereupon, covering the earth like locusts, the army started out. During the month fixed for the search for Sita, Rama and Lakshmana remained on the mountain Prasravana.

The valiant Shatavali set out with all speed for the north, that marvellous region where the monarch of the mountain rises[1] whilst the leader of the monkey bands, Vinata, went towards the east. Tara,[2] Angada and others, in company with that monkey born of Pavana, marched towards the southern region inhabited by Agastya ; and Sushena, that lion among monkeys, went to the west, that fearful region protected by Varuna.

Having despatched the generals of his forces to each of the quarters, that king of the monkey hosts experienced supreme satisfaction.

Under the orders of their sovereign, all the monkey leaders departed in great haste, each in the direction assigned to him and, full of valour, those monkeys shouted, cheered, howled and

[1] Mount Meru.
[2] The General Tara.

chattered, rushing on and on amidst a great uproar. Having listened to the instructions of their monarch, the leaders of these monkeys cried: " We shall bring Sita back and slay Ravana ". Some said: " I alone shall defeat Ravana in open combat and having laid him low, shall deliver the daughter of Janaka, still trembling with fear, saying to her ' Rest here, thou art weary '." Others said: " Singlehanded I shall recover Janaki even if it be from the depth of hell; I shall uproot the trees, cleave the mountains, penetrate the earth and churn up the ocean." One said, " Without doubt I can clear four miles in one bound! " and another, " I can clear a hundred," and yet another, " I am able to leap more than a hundred. Neither on earth, in the sky nor on the sea nor mountains nor in forests, not even in the nether regions can anything bar my progress ".

Thus in turn did the monkeys, proud of their strength, speak in the presence of their king.

CHAPTER 46

Sugriva narrates his Travels through the World

THE leaders of the monkeys having departed, Rama enquired of Sugriva saying:—" How is it that thou knowest all the quarters of the earth? "

Then Sugriva, bowing low, said to Rama: " Hear me and I will tell thee all.

" When Bali pursued the giant Dundubhi, in the form of a buffalo, in the direction of the Malaya mountain, Mahisha[1] entered a cave in that mountain and Bali, desirous of slaying that Asura, followed him.

" I remained obediently at the entrance of the cave, but a whole year passed and Bali did not re-emerge. Then the cavern was filled with foaming blood which gushed forth, and seeing this, I was terrified and consumed with a burning grief on account of my brother. Distracted, I reflected: ' My elder

[1] Another name of Dundubhi, meaning " great or powerful animal," a buffalo.

brother is certainly dead' and I placed a rock, as large as a hill, at the mouth of the cave, thinking 'The buffalo will not be able to come out and will die'; after which I returned to Kishkindha giving up all hope of Bali being alive.

"There obtaining the mighty kingdom with Tara and Ruma, surrounded by my friends, I began to pass my days in peace.

"That bull among monkeys, however, having slain Dundubhi returned, and trembling with fear, in all humility, I made over the crown to him.

"That wicked wretch, however, beside himself with rage, wishing to slay me, followed me whilst I sought to fly with my ministers. It was then that, hotly pursued by him, I passed by various streams, forests and cities. The earth appeared to me like the reflection of a whirling firebrand seen in a mirror or a puddle.[1]

"Journeying towards the eastern region, I beheld many kinds of trees, beautiful mountains, charming caverns and lakes. I saw the Udaya Mountain rich in gold and the white sea, the abode of Apsaras. Pursued by Bali, flying on and on, O Lord, I turned and continued my course then, changing my direction once more, I made for the south, covered by the Vindhya Forest and embellished with sandal wood trees. Thereafter, seeing Bali among the woods, on the mountains, I went westwards still followed by him.

"It is thus that I grew conversant with every kind of region and finally reached the Astachala Mountains. Beyond that most beautiful and elevated of ranges I turned to the north and passed Himavat, Meru and the Northern Sea.

"Unable to find refuge from Bali, the sagacious Hanuman said to me:—'O King, I recollect now that the Lord of the Monkeys was formerly cursed by the Sage Matanga in this very hermitage. If he should enter this asylum, his head will be split into a hundred pieces; we can, therefore, take up our abode here without anxiety.'

"O Son of a King, I, thereupon, went to the Rishyamuka Mountain, nor did Bali dare to come there for fear of the Sage Matanga. This is how, O King, I visited every part of the world and took refuge in this cave."

[1] Lit.: Made by the imprint of a cow's hoof.

CHAPTER 47

The Return of the Monkeys

In order to find Vaidehi, those leaders of monkeys, in obedience to their sovereign's will, speedily went forth in all directions to their destinations, and they explored lakes, streams, plains, cities and tracts rendered impassible by torrents. Then those chiefs of the monkey bands searched the regions described by Sugriva with their mountains, woods and forests. Engaged during the day in seeking for Sita, when night fell, they stretched themselves on the ground, and coming to trees covered with fruits in all seasons, they slept there.

Counting the day of their departure as the first, at the end of a month, giving up hope, they returned to their king on the Prasravana mountain.

Having scoured the eastern region with his forces, the mighty Vinata returned without having seen Sita. Thereafter the great monkey Shatabali came back disappointed with his forces, having scoured the whole of the northern quarter. And Sushena, at the end of the month, ranging the western region without success, presented himself in company with his monkeys before Sugriva.

Coming before Sugriva who was seated with Rama on a ridge of the Prasravana Mountain, and paying obeisance to them, Sushena said: "We have searched all the mountains, deep woods, valleys, ravines and the countries situated on the shores of the sea. All the places described by thee have been scoured by us, as also all the jungles intertwined by creepers abounding in thickets that are impassable and the hilly districts. Huge animals have been encountered by us, which we have slain, and we have searched these densely wooded regions again and again, O Lord of the Monkeys. It is Hanuman, who is mighty and nobly born, who will discover Maithili; the son of the Wind has undoubtedly gone to where Sita has been taken."

CHAPTER 48

Angada slays an Asura

THE monkey Hanuman, accompanied by Tara[1] and Angada, swiftly set out to the quarter assigned to him by Sugriva. With all those leaders of monkeys, he travelled a great distance and explored the woods and caves of the Vindhya Mountains. Rugged crags, impassable rivers, lakes, vast jungles, groves, innumerable hills covered with forests were searched by the monkeys on every side, without their being able to find Maithili, the daughter of Janaka, anywhere.

Subsisting on various roots and fruits, they were overcome by fatigue in that uninhabited and waterless region amidst the fearful ravines and solitary places. Having searched that immense area extremely hard of access, with its mighty forests, containing caves, all those foremost of monkeys fearlessly penetrated into another equally inhospitable region, where the trees yielded neither fruit, flowers nor foliage and where the streams were dried up and even roots were rare. There, neither buffaloe nor deer, nor elephants, tigers, birds nor any other animals, that are found in the forest, could be seen. There were neither trees, grass, plants nor herbs, and in that place there were no pleasant pools with flowering or fragrant lotuses and no bees to be observed.

There dwelt the fortunate Sage, Kandu, a treasury of asceticism, of truthful speech, whose austerities had rendered him invincible and who was irascible, having lost his young son at the age of ten years in the forest. Filled with wrath on account of his death, that great-souled One had laid a curse on the entire vast forest, rendering it unfit to harbour any creature. This inaccessible region, deserted by beasts and birds, the hidden recesses of the woods, the mountain caves and the bends of the rivers were carefully searched by the monkeys in order to carry out Sugriva's desire, but they were unable to find the daughter of Janaka or her abductor, Ravana, there.

[1] The General Tara.

Having entered a wood, overgrown with creepers and briars, they beheld a terrible titan, of dreadful deeds, cherishing no fear, even for the Gods. Seeing that formidable titan, who stood erect like a great hill, the monkeys pressed close to each other girding up their loins.

Then that mighty Asura said to them " You are lost ! " and, clenching his fists, rushed upon them in fury, but Angada, the Son of Bali, thinking it was Ravana, struck him with the palm of his hand with such force, that he fell to the earth like a great hill, vomiting blood. When he had ceased to breathe, the triumphant monkeys searched that mountain cavern ; and having satisfied themselves that it had been thoroughly explored, those dwellers of the woods entered into another fearful cave. After having searched that place also, they emerged exhausted and wholly dispirited sat down at the foot of a solitary tree.

CHAPTER 49

The Monkeys search the Southern Region in vain

THEN the eminently wise Angada addressed all the monkeys and, though himself fatigued, exhorted them to take courage, saying :

" We have searched the forests, mountains, rivers and impenetrable wilds, valleys and caverns with care, without finding the daughter of Janaka, Sita, or that wicked wretch, the titan, who bore her away. A great part of the time assigned to us by Sugriva, whose commands are inexorable, has elapsed ; therefore, banishing languor, despondency, torpor and fatigue, together let us examine every region once again. Search in such a way that Sita may be discovered by us. Perseverance, ability and ardour are said to conduce to success ; I therefore address you thus :—O Dwellers in the Woods, explore the whole inaccessible forest to-day without counting the cost, success will wholly depend on your exertions ; to permit yourselves to be overcome by fatigue or give way to sleep is not fitting. Sugriva is irascible and inflicts harsh punishments ; he is ever to be feared, as also the magnanimous Rama. I speak in your own

interests ; therefore, if you concur, act accordingly or let someone point out what alternative will benefit us all, O Monkeys."

Hearing Angada's words, Gandhamadana, though faint from thirst and fatigue, spoke in clear accents, saying :—" That which Angada has said is worthy of him and is appropriate and timely, let us act upon it ! Let us search the hills, caves, rocks, desert places and waterfalls, in accord with the instructions given by Sugriva ; let us scour the forest and the mountain ridges together ! "

Then the monkeys, rising, full of valour, began to range the south covered by the Vindhya forests, afresh. Scaling the mountain that resembled an autumnal cloud, rich in silver, with its innumerable peaks and valleys, those foremost of monkeys, eager to find Sita, ranged the enchanting Lodhra forests and the woods of Saptaparna trees. Ascending to the summit of the mountain, though endued with immense energy, they were overcome with fatigue, yet they did not see Vaidehi, the beloved consort of Rama, anywhere. Having surveyed that hill with its innumerable ravines, as far as eye could see, the monkeys looking on every side, descended and, reaching the base, harassed and beside themselves, halted for an instant under a tree ; then finding themselves less fatigued, they prepared to explore the southern region again.

Thereafter the chiefs of the monkeys, with Hanuman at their head, began to range the Vindhya hills once more.

CHAPTER 50

Hanuman and his Companions enter the Rikshabila Cavern

THE Monkey Hanuman, in company with the General Tara and Angada, once again explored the deep woods and ravines of the Vindhya range. Those monkeys searched the caverns which resounded with the roar of lions and tigers as well as the inaccessible and mighty torrents. Finally they came to the south-western summit of the mountain and, while they rested there, time passed.

That region is hard to explore on account of the vast extent of the forests and the dangerous ravines and caverns; nevertheless the Son of the Wind examined it all thoroughly. Separated from each other by a short distance, Gaja, Gavaksha, Gavaya, Sharabha, Gandhamadana, Mainda, Dvivida, Hanuman and Jambavan, the youthful Prince Angada and Tara, dwellers of the woods, began to search those regions in the south covered by the mountain range.

While they were exploring this place on every side, they observed the opening to a cave named Rikshabila, difficult of entry, guarded by a giant. Tortured with hunger and thirst and overcome with exhaustion they espied this cavity overgrown by trees, bushes and creepers, from which herons, swans, geese and waterfowl were issuing, dripping with water and covered with the pollen of lotuses.

Drawing near to that fragrant cave, difficult of access, those monkeys were struck with astonishment and desired to enter it. Then those foremost of monkeys, seeing signs of water, full of joy, approached that subterranean chamber abounding in every kind of creature, resembling the abode of Indra, which was impenetrable and fearful to behold.

And Hanuman, the son of the Wind-god, who resembled the peak of a mountain, said to those redoubtable monkeys, who dwelt in the woods and forests :—" We have explored the southern region covered with a chain of mountains ; we are exhausted with fatigue and unable to find Maithili. From yonder cave, swans, cranes, herons and waterfowl are emerging on every side, drenched with water. Without doubt there is a well or pool to be found there for these trees at the mouth of the cave are green."

Hanuman having spoken thus, all the monkeys entered into the dark cave, bereft of sun and moon, that caused their hair to stand on end. They heard the roar of lions and the sound of deer and birds and those invincible monkeys felt their courage and prowess fail ; moving with the speed of the wind and despite the darkness, their sight being unimpaired, they penetrated deep into the cave and beheld a luminous, enchanting and marvellous region filled with different kinds of trees of varying fragrance. Pressing close to one another, they advanced four

miles into the interior and fainting with fatigue, bewildered, seeking for water, they continued to descend into the darkness. Emaciated, their faces woe-begone, spent, despairing of their lives, those monkeys then beheld a light. Happily they approached that spot and saw trees glistening like gold, possessing the brilliance of fire, and they beheld Salas, Talas, Tamalas, Punnagas, Vanjulas, Dhavas, Champakas, Nagavrikshas and Karnikaras in full flower with clusters of golden blossom, crimson buds, twigs and creepers adorning them, dazzling as the dawn, their trunks being of emerald and their bark luminous. There were also lakes of blue lotus, abounding in waterfowl, there, and great golden trees encircled that place, that shone like the first light of dawn and fishes of gold and enormous lotuses were to be seen in pools of tranquil waters. Gold and silver palaces were to be found there with little windows of refined gold festooned with chains of pearls, the floors paved with silver and gold and encrusted with pearls and diamonds.

And the monkeys beheld splendid mansions everywhere and trees laden with fruit and flowers that shone like coral and precious gems and golden bees and honey in abundance. Couches and marvellous seats of immense size, decorated with gold and diamonds, drew their gaze, as well as gold and silver vessels, heaps of aloes and sandal, pure foods, fruits and roots, costly vehicles, delicious syrups, priceless raiment and great piles of woollen cloths and wonderful skins.

Whilst wandering here and there about that subterranean chamber, those courageous monkeys beheld a woman at a short distance from them. Attired in robes of bark and a black antelope skin, that ascetic, given to fasting, shone with a great effulgence.

Astonished, those monkeys halted suddenly and Hanuman addressed her saying :—" Who art thou ? To whom does this cavern belong ? "

Bowing down to that aged woman, Hanuman, who resembled a mountain, with joined palms, enquired of her: "Who art thou ? To whom does this retreat, this cave and its jewels belong ? "

CHAPTER 51

The Tale of the Ascetic

HAVING spoken thus to that blessed ascetic given to the practice of austerity, who was clad in bark and a black antelope skin, Hanuman added :—

" We entered this cave enveloped in darkness being wholly exhausted with hunger and thirst and overcome with fatigue; having penetrated into the depths to seek for something to eat, we have become distracted on seeing all these marvels so that we have almost taken leave of our senses.

" To whom do these golden trees belong, that shine like the sun about to rise and these pure foods, roots and fruits; these mansions of gold and silver with their windows of gold refined in the crucible and their network of pearls? Who has produced these golden trees covered with marvellous flowers and fruit emitting a delicious fragrance, the golden lotuses that float on the pure waters, the golden fish and the turtles? Are they sprung from thy power or do they owe their existence to another? It behoves thee to tell us, who are ignorant in the matter."

Hearing the words of Hanuman, the virtuous ascetic, engaged in the welfare of all beings, replied to Hanuman saying :—" O Foremost of Monkeys, Maya is the name of the magician of great powers, by whom this entire golden grove has been constructed. He who created this enchanting and celestial place was formerly the chief architect of the Giants.[1] Having practised austerity for a thousand years in the vast forest, he obtained a boon from the Grandsire of the World, in virtue of which he attained complete mastery in his art, as well as an absolute control over the materials required therein. Having accomplished everything , that wonderful one, commanding every enjoyment, for a time lived happily in the mighty forest. Thereafter he conceived a great passion for the nymph Hema, whereupon Purandara hurled his thunderbolt at him and slew him.

[1] Danavas or Daityas.

" Then Brahma bestowed this marvellous forest with his golden mansion on Hema with the perpetual enjoyment of her desires. I, Swayamprabha by name, the daughter of Merusavarni, guard this dwelling belonging to Hema, who, skilled in the arts of dancing and singing, is my dear friend, O Foremost of Monkeys ! By her favour, this vast forest has been given into my hands. Now tell me for what purpose and with what motive you have come hither ? Why are you roaming in these inaccessible woods ? Having partaken of these fruits and roots and drunk of the pure water, tell me all."

CHAPTER 52

Swayamprabha frees the Monkeys from the Cave

THAT virtuous ascetic, greatly mystified, addressed all those leaders of monkeys who were now rested, saying :—

" O Monkeys, if, satisfied by the fruits, your fatigue is alleviated, I would fain listen to your story if it is fit to be heard by me."

Hearing these words, Hanuman, the Son of Maruta began to relate all with perfect candour, saying : " The Sovereign of the whole world, Rama, who is equal to Mahendra and Varuna, the illustrious son of Dasaratha, retired to the Dandaka Forest in company with his brother Lakshmana and his consort Vaidehi. The latter was forcibly carried away by Ravana.

" His friend is that valiant monkey named Sugriva. By that monarch, the foremost of monkeys, we have been sent hither and with the assistance of those led by Angada, we have been dispatched to search the southern region inhabited by Agastya and protected by Yama. We have been commissioned to search for Sita, the daughter of Videha and the demon Ravana, who is able to change his form at will. Having scoured the forests and the seas of the south, overcome with hunger, we sat down at the foot of the trees. Our faces drained of colour, absorbed in thought, we were sunk in an ocean of anxiety which we were unable to cross.

" Casting our eyes round, we observed a huge cave hidden by trees and creepers and enveloped in gloom. Now swans, geese

and osprey flew out from that cave their wings dripping with water, and I said to those monkeys, 'Let us enter there!' which all agreed to do. Anxious to accomplish our purpose, we went in grasping each others hands, thus forcing an entry into that dark cave; this is our purpose and the reason why we have come hither. Having come here, famished and exhausted, we, who were sorely tried by hunger, have been entertained on fruits and roots with the traditional hospitality. Thou hast saved us, who were weary and suffering from starvation; now say what service the monkeys may render thee in return?"

Thus addressed by the apes, the all-knowing Swayamprabha replied to those monkey leaders, saying: "I am well pleased with all these excellent monkeys; I am but fulfilling my duty and have no need of anything."

Thus answered in words filled with nobility and virtue, Hanuman addressed that irreproachable lady saying: "We have all found refuge with thee, O Virtuous Ascetic, but the time fixed by the magnanimous Sugriva has run out since we entered the cave, it behoves thee, therefore, to assist us to leave this place. If the commands of Sugriva be disregarded, it will mean death for us. Please deliver us all; the fear of Sugriva afflicts us. Great is the task that has been undertaken by us and if we remain here, that work of ours will not be accomplished."

Thus addressed by Hanuman, the ascetic answered him saying:—"For a living being to emerge from this cave alive, is hard, but by the power of my asceticism acquired through self control I shall deliver all the monkeys from this subterranean chamber. Do you all close your eyes, for none will succeed in issuing from this place if their eyes remain open."

Then, desirous of going out, all those magnanimous monkeys instantly closed their eyes covering them with their hands, possessed of slender fingers, and in the twinkling of an eye, the ascetic transported them outside the cave and having saved them from danger, in order to encourage them, said:—

"This is the auspicious Vindhya Mountain covered with trees and herbs, there the Prasravana Mountain and the great ocean. May good fortune attend you! I go to my abode, O Foremost of Monkeys."

With these words Swayamprabha re-entered the cave.

CHAPTER 53

Angada and his Companions consider what Course to take

THEN the monkeys beheld that awe-inspiring ocean, the abode of Varuna, shoreless, thunderous and abounding in huge billows.

Now the month fixed by the king as the term set for the search had passed while they were exploring that mountain fastness, the miraculous creation of Maya. Sitting down at the foot of the Vindhya Mountain amidst the blossoming trees, those high-souled monkeys anxiously began to reflect among themselves.

Perceiving the spring trees bending beneath the weight of flowers interlaced by hundreds of creepers, they were filled with apprehension. Recognizing the advent of spring and knowing the time appointed for their task had run out, each in turn sank to the ground.

Then that monkey having the shoulders of a lion, with plump and long arms, the youthful Prince Angada, endowed with wisdom, duly honouring the aged apes and other dwellers in the woods, spoke thus :—

" At the command of the monarch of the monkeys, we set out and, while we sojourned in the cave, a full month has passed away, O Monkeys. The month Ashvayuj[1] was the time fixed, which was not to be exceeded. This is known to you ! What should now be done ? Receiving the mandate from your master, you who are his trusted men, politic, devoted to his welfare, skilled in every work, incomparable in its execution and renowned in every quarter, have set out on this campaign with me as your appointed leader. Now, having failed to attain our objective, we shall certainly die, of this there is no shadow of doubt. Who, failing to execute the commands of the King of the Monkeys, can live at ease ? The time allotted by Sugriva has run out, all that remains is for us, the dwellers in the woods, to die fasting. Stern by nature, jealous of his authority, he will not forgive us if we return having transgressed his orders. He

[1] September–October.

will regard it as a crime if we come before him without news of Sita; it is therefore better to allow ourselves to die of hunger here than give up all hope of seeing our sons, wives, wealth and homes. It were preferable to die here than perish ignominously at the hands of Sugriva. Further, I was not installed as heir-apparent by Sugriva but by Rama, that king among men of immortal exploits. Entertaining enmity to me of old, the king, finding me at fault, will determine to take my life by cruel means. Of what use is it to meet death in the presence of my friends who will witness the last moments of my existence? I shall remain here cn the sacred shore of the sea for the last supreme fast."

Hearing the words of the crown prince, all those monkeys, exclaimed in sympathy:—

"Sugriva is harsh by nature and Raghava is devoted to his tender spouse. The king, perceiving that the time has past without our having been successful in our undertaking and that we have not found Vaidehi, will certainly put us to death in order to do what is agreeable to Rama. Those who fail (to execute his commands) may not enter the presence of a king. Having come hither as the principal servants of Sugriva, we must either find Sita or obtain information concerning her or else we must enter the region of Yama, O Hero."

Hearing the monkeys speak thus in their terror, the General Tara said:—"Of what use is it to yield to despair? Let us re-enter the subterranean chamber and take up our abode there. That place abounding in flowers, food and water, which has been created by the power of illusion, is inaccessible. There we need not fear Purandara Himself or Raghava or the King of the Monkeys."

At these words to which Angada himself assented, all the monkeys with renewed confidence, cried:—"Without delay, let us from now on employ those means that will save us from death."

CHAPTER 54

Hanuman seeks to discourage Angada from his Design

When the General Tara, who was as radiant as the moon, had spoken thus, Hanuman deemed that Angada had already usurped supreme authority. He knew the son of Bali to be endowed with the eightfold intelligence, the four powers and the fourteen qualities,[1] to be possessed of valour, energy and martial ardour, waxing in glory like the moon in the bright fortnight, the equal of Brihaspati in wisdom, in bravery resembling his sire and obedient to Tara's counsel as Purandara regards the instruction of Shukra.[2]

Thereupon, Hanuman, versed in all branches of learning, resolved to win over Angada, who had become lax in the service of his sovereign and bring him back to the right path. Reflecting on the four means for bringing about peace, he chose the second, that of sowing dissension amongst the monkeys by subtle suggestion ; when the disaffection was general, he sought to instil fear in Angada's heart, by harsh words uttered in severe tones :—

He said :—" O Son of Bali, surely thou art a warrior more skilful even than thy sire and art able to govern the monkey kingdom as well as he, but, O Foremost of Monkeys, the apes were ever fickle by nature. Bereft of their wives and sons, they will never suffer thy rule. This I declare to thee in the presence

[1] Eightfold Intelligence—The quality of accepting the truth and what is right, cherishing it, remembering it, propagating it. Knowledge of the positive and negative side of a matter. Knowledge of the ultimate essence.

Four Powers—Physical power, mental power, power of resource, power of making friends.

Fourteen Qualities—Knowledge of Time and Place. Endurance. Empirical knowledge. Skill. Physical strength. Power to conceal one's counsel. The honouring of one's obligations and promises. Heroism. Appreciation of the enemy's strength and one's own in relation to it. Gratitude. Beneficence to one's dependents or suppliants. Non-acceptance of insult. Freedom from uncontrolled movements. Poise.

[2] Shukra—Indra's spiritual preceptor.

of all! Neither by conciliation, gifts nor penalties shalt thou succeed in drawing Jambavan, Nila, the mighty ape, Suhotra, or myself to thy side. One who is strong can overcome the weak and usurp his place, therefore, he who is weak should, for his own safety, never incur the enmity of the strong. This cave, that thou deemest to be a safe refuge and which is said to be impregnable, can easily be penetrated by Lakshmana with his arrows. Formerly this tiny rift was made by Indra hurling his thunderbolt against it, but Lakshmana will pierce it like a leaf by means of his keen arrows. He possesses innumerable arrows of this kind, whose impact resembles lightning, capable of shattering the mountains themselves.

" O Scourge of Thy Foes, as soon as thou dost install thyself in that place, the monkeys, remembering their wives and sons, will decide to forsake thee. Pining for domestic happiness, ever restless, anxious and weary of their pitiable plight, they will abandon thee. Thereafter, bereft of friends, relatives and those who seek thy welfare, even the trembling of a blade of grass will fill thee with terror.

" Lakshmana's arrows, irresistible in flight, keen, formidable and of exceeding velocity, will transfix thee where thou hast sought to conceal thyself.

" If, however, assuming a humble guise, thou, with us, dost present thyself before Sugriva, he will establish thee in the kingdom and restore thee as rightful heir. A virtuous monarch, firm in his vows, honorable and loyal, he desires thy welfare and will assuredly not kill thee. Thy paternal uncle is devoted to thy mother and wishes to do what is agreeable to her, this is the purpose of his life and she has no other son, therefore, O Angada, return with us."

CHAPTER 55

The Monkeys decide to die of Hunger

HEARING Hanuman's speech uttered with humility, filled with wisdom and justice and reflecting honour on Sugriva, Angada answered him saying :—

" Stability, purity of mind and disposition, compassion, rectitude, daring and perseverance are unknown to Sugriva. He who, while her son was living, united himself to the beloved queen of his elder brother, on whom he should rightfully have looked as a mother, is to be condemned. What does he know of morality who, while his brother was in the grip of an Asura, closed up the opening of the cave ? What gratitude will he manifest who, having clasped his hand in friendship, forgot the favours received from his great benefactor, Raghava, of imperishable deeds ? Where is righteousness in one who directed us to search for Sita here, not from fear of disloyalty but of Lakshmana ? Who would trust that fickle, impious and ungrateful wretch, more especially those sprung from his own race ? Whether he be possessed of good qualities or no, having established me in the kingdom, will he suffer the son of his enemy to live ? How can I, whose counsels have been disclosed, who have been found guilty, who am powerless, poor and weak, expect to survive if I repair to Kishkindha ? In his desire to retain the throne, Sugriva, who is wily, cunning and cruel, will assuredly place me in chains. For me death through fasting is preferable to being tortured and confined. Let all the monkeys abandon me here and return home. I vow I shall never re-enter the city but shall stay here and fast to the end ; death is better for me.

" Bowing to the king and also to the mighty Raghava, enquire after their welfare for me and bring news of my health and state to my adopted mother Ruma. To Tara, my real mother, offer consolation, for she is compassionate and pious and naturally full of love for her son. When she learns of my death, she will certainly yield up her life."

Having said this, Angada, making obeisance to the elders, his countenance woe-begone, weeping, spreading out some kusha grass sat down on the ground ; as he sat there, those foremost of monkeys groaned, burning tears falling from their eyes. Thereupon surrounding Angada, condemning Sugriva and praising Bali, those monkeys resolved to starve themselves to death and, seating themselves on the seashore on heaps of darbha grass, pointing towards the south, those excellent monkeys sipping water, facing the east, resolved to die, saying:—" This is better for us ! "

As they spoke of the exile of Rama, the death of Dasaratha, the carnage in Janasthana, the slaying of Jatayu, the abduction of Vaidehi, the killing of Bali and the wrath of Raghava, those monkeys were filled with fear ; and while those innumerable monkeys, resembling the peaks of mountains sat there, the whole region with its torrents and caverns resounded with their lamentations like the roll of thunder in the skies.

CHAPTER 56

The Intervention of Sampati

WHILE the monkeys remained seated on the mountain plateau resolved on their last great fast, the King of the Vultures by chance came to that place. That long-lived bird, the fortunate brother of Jatayu, was renowned for his strength and prowess.

Issuing from a cave on the mighty Vindhya Mountain, he observed the monkeys seated there and, highly gratified, said:— " Every man reapeth the fruit of his former acts, on account of this, after a long time, this food comes to me. I shall eat up these monkeys one by one as they die."

Eyeing those apes, the Vulture expressed himself thus, and hearing the utterance of that famished bird, Angada, full of apprehension, addressed Hanuman in faint accents, saying :—

" Behold, on account of Sita, Death, the descendant of Vivasvat, has come to this place to destroy the monkeys. Rama's purpose not having been effected nor the mandate of the

king obeyed, this calamity has overtaken the monkeys unaware. Thou art conversant in detail with all that Jatayu, that Prince of Vultures did for the sake of Sita. All beings, even those born of the mating of beasts, desire to please Rama at the cost of their lives as we have done. On account of Rama's love and compassion, people bear each other affection and pity. The blessed Jatayu voluntarily laid down his life for the good of Rama; we too, exhausted and about to die, came to this forest to render a service to the Son of Raghu. We have searched the woods in vain for Maithili. Happy is that Prince of Vultures who was slain in combat by Ravana for he is freed from the fear of Sugriva and has attained the supreme abode. The death of Jatayu and King Dasaratha and the abduction of Sita has placed the monkeys in jeopardy. The sojourn of Rama and Lakshmana in the forest with Sita, Raghava's slaying of Bali with an arrow, the slaughter of innumerable demons by Rama in his wrath, all owe their origin to those boons granted to Kaikeyi."

Hearing these piteous words and seeing the monkeys stretched on the ground the magnanimous King of the Vultures was deeply moved and that sharp beaked bird cried out:—

" Who is it who, causing my heart to tremble, speaks thus of the death of my brother, dearer to me than life itself? How did the demon and the vulture come to fight in Janasthana? It is after a long time that I hear the name of my brother spoken. I wish to descend from this lofty mountain height. I am well pleased to hear of my youthful and valiant brother, renowned for his exploits. I wish to learn of the death of my brother, Jatayu, O Foremost of Monkeys, and how King Dasaratha, whose elder son is Rama, beloved of his elders, came to be his friend? I am unable to fly in consequence of my wings having been scorched by the rays of the sun. Assist me to descend from this mountain, O Conquerers of your Foes! "

CHAPTER 57

Angada's Narrative

THOUGH the voice of Sampati faltered on account of grief, the Chiefs of the Monkeys did not trust him, doubting his intentions.

Seated for the purpose of fasting to death, the monkeys, seeing that vulture, framed the following resolution, saying :—

" Let us help him to descend and he will then devour us all ; should he do so, while we are seated here fasting, we shall have achieved our purpose and shall speedily attain success."

Having thus resolved, they assisted the vulture to descend from the summit of the mountain and Angada addressed him saying :—

" There was a great King of the Monkeys named Riksharajas, the founder of our race ; he was my grandsire, O Bird. He had two virtuous sons, Bali and Sugriva, both were exceedingly powerful. My father Bali, was famed throughout the world for his exploits.

" Now it happened that the Sovereign of the whole earth, the descendant of Ikshwaku, the great and illustrious car warrior, Rama, the son of King Dasaratha, obedient to the injunctions of his sire, fixed in the path of righteousness, entered the forest of Dandaka with his brother Lakshmana and his consort Vaidehi. His spouse was forcibly borne away from Janasthana by Ravana and the friend of Rama's father, the Prince of Vultures, Jatayu, observed Sita, Videha's daughter, being carried through the air. Having shattered Ravana's chariot and released Maithili, that vulture being old and exhausted finally fell under Ravana's blows. Slain by the powerful Ravana, he had his funeral rites performed by Rama himself and attained the celestial abode. Then Raghava allied himself with my paternal uncle, Sugriva, and slew my sire, who had banished him from the kingdom with his ministers.

" Having killed Bali, Rama installed Sugriva as Lord and Monarch of all the Monkeys. We have been sent by him in all

directions under Rama's orders to search for Sita but we have not found Vaidehi, as by night one is unable to perceive the splendour of the sun. Having explored the Dandaka Forest, we, through ignorance, penetrated into a cave through a rift in the earth. That cavern was constructed by the illusive power of Maya and there we passed the month fixed by the King of the Monkeys, as the term appointed ; while executing the commands of Sugriva, we exceeded the time fixed and from fear have seated ourselves here, resolved to die of hunger, for, if we return to face the wrath of Kakutstha, Sugriva and Lakshmana, we shall surely be put to death ! "

CHAPTER 58

Sampati tells the monkeys of Sita's Place of Concealment

HEARING the pitiful narrative of the monkeys, who had resolved to give up their lives, the vulture in mournful accents, with tears in his eyes, answered them saying :—

" O Monkeys, you have told me, that Jatayu, my younger brother, was slain in combat by Ravana, who was his superior in strength. Old and bereft of my wings, I can only resign myself to these tidings for I no longer have the power to avenge my brother's death.

" Formerly, when Indra slew the demon Vritra, my brother and I, wishing to prove which of us was superior, soared into the sky, drawing nearer and nearer to the sun with its aureole of rays. Flinging ourselves into the currents of air, we rose rapidly higher and higher, but the sun having reached its zenith, Jatayu grew faint. Seeing my brother tormented by the sun's rays, I covered him affectionately with my wings, for he was suffering greatly, whereupon they were scorched and I fell on the Vindhya Mountain, O Foremost of Monkeys, where I remained, not knowing what had befallen him."

Thus addressed by Sampati, Jatayu's brother, the eminently sagacious Prince Angada answered :—" If thou art indeed the brother of Jatayu and hast heard what I have related, then tell

us, dost thou know aught of that titan's abode? Say, if thou knowest, whether the retreat of that short-sighted, vilest of demons, Ravana, is near or far away?"

Then the illustrious elder brother of Jatayu answered in words worthy of him, causing delight to the monkeys, and said: "O Monkeys, my pinions being burnt, I am a vulture bereft of strength, yet by my words alone, I shall render Rama a signal service.

"I know the realm of Varuna and those covered by Vishnu's three strides. I am also conversant with the wars between the Gods and Asuras and the churning of the ocean, from whence the Amrita issued. Though age has deprived me of strength and my vitality is ebbing away, this mission of Rama's must be my first concern.

"I saw a young and lovely woman, beautifully attired, being carried off by the wicked Ravana and that beautiful creature was crying out 'O Rama', 'O Rama', 'O Lakshmana'. Tearing off her ornaments she cast them on the earth; her silken cloak, resembling the rays of the sun striking on a mountain summit, shone against the dark skin of the demon like a lightning flash irradiating a cloudy sky. Since she was calling 'Rama', 'Rama' I believe her to have been Sita. Now hear me, and I will tell you where the abode of that demon is to be found.

"The son of Vishravas and brother of Kuvera, that demon, named Ravana, resides in the city of Lanka, constructed by Vishwakarma, which lies a full hundred yojanas from here on an island in the sea, furnished with golden gateways and ramparts of Kancana gold, with lofty palaces gleaming with Hema gold adorning it. A great wall, bright as the sun, encircles it, and it is there that the unfortunate Vaidehi, attired in a silken cloth, is confined in Ravana's inner apartments, carefully guarded by demon women. It is there you will find Sita.

"Four hundred miles from here on the southern shore of the sea dwells Ravana. O Monkeys, hie thither speedily and demonstrate your valour! By supernatural means, I know that having seen that place you will return. The first course is the path taken by the fork-tailed shrikes and others living on grain; the second by those who live on insects and fruit; the third by

cocks; the fourth by herons, hawks and birds of prey; the fifth by vultures; the sixth by swans endowed with strength, energy, youth and beauty and the last by eagles; we have all derived our origin from Vainateya,[1] O Foremost of Monkeys. I shall avenge that execrable deed of that eater of flesh (Ravana) as also his cruelty to my brother.[2]

"Resting here, I am able to see Ravana and Janaki, for we all possess the supersensual sight of Suparna.[3] It is by virtue of our nature and on account of the food we eat, that we can see clearly to a distance of four hundred miles. We are instinctively drawn to search for our food at a distance, whilst other birds scratch it up with their claws at the foot of the trees where they roost, their sight being limited.

"Do ye look about for a means to cross over the salty waves; having found Vaidehi, return, your purpose accomplished. Now I desire to be taken by you to the shore of the sea, the abode of Varuna; I will there perform the water ritual for the spirit of my high-souled brother, who has gone to the celestial abode."

At those words those mighty monkeys carried Sampati, whose wings had been burnt, to the shore of the ocean, after which they brought back that King of the Birds to the Vindhya Mountain; and, having received the information concerning Sita, they experienced great joy.

CHAPTER 59

He encourages them to pursue their Quest

HEARING these words, sweet as nectar, uttered by the Vulture King, the monkey chiefs were filled with relief.

Then Jambavan, the foremost among the apes, with all the monkeys, rising from the ground, said to the Vulture King:—"Where is Sita? Who has seen her? Who has carried away Mithila's daughter? Do thou tell us all this and thus be the

[1] Vainateya—The Eagle Garuda, said to be Vishnu's messenger and vehicle.

[2] Implying by sending the monkeys he would be avenged on Ravana.

[3] Suparna—another name for Vainateya or Garuda.

means of saving the dwellers in the woods. Who is able to forget the power of the arrows of Dasaratha that fly with the speed of lightning and those that are loosed by Lakshmana ? "

Then Sampati, once again consoling those monkeys who had risen from their fasting and who were all attention to what was being related concerning Sita, well pleased, said to them :—

" Hear how I came to learn of Sita's abduction at this place and who it was that told me where that large-eyed lady could be found ! It is a long time since I fell on to this inaccessible mountain, many miles in extent. Now I am old and feeble in life and limb ; in this condition my son, named Suparshwa, the best of birds, brought me food regularly. If the Gandharvas are extremely pleasure loving and the serpent race prone to anger and the deer exceedingly timid, we, in our turn, are voracious.

" One day, tormented with hunger, I demanded food and my son flew off at sunrise to procure it, but returned at night without any flesh. He, the increaser of my delight, had grown tired of searching for nourishment and in order to propitiate me said in all sincerity :—

" ' My dear father, wishing to bring thee thine accustomed portion, I flew into the air and stationed myself near the approach of the Mahendra Mountain in order to obstruct the passage of thousands of creatures who range the sea. There I was, looking down, guarding the pass, when suddenly I observed someone resembling a mass of collyrium, carrying a woman as beautiful as the dawn. Seeing them, I resolved to seize them for my prey, but he humbly implored me in peaceful accents to let him pass. None on earth, not even the wicked, devour the peaceful willingly, how much less a creature like myself ! He passed on quickly, pushing away the air, as it were, with his energy. Thereafter, those beings that inhabit space approached me and paid obeisance to me and the great Rishis said to me :—

" ' " By good fortune Sita still lives ! It is well for thee that he has passed by thee with this woman."

" ' Then the glorious Siddhas addressed me and informed me that it was Ravana, the King of the Demons, whom I had seen with the consort of Rama, the son of Dasaratha, the daughter of Janaka, who, her silken attire torn, overcome with an excess

of grief, her hair falling about her, was calling the names of "Rama" and "Lakshmana". Thus, O My Father, is how the time has passed.'

"All this did Suparshwa tell me, and even on hearing it I did not consider exerting my strength, for without wings, how can a bird undertake anything? But hear how I can help you with my word and knowledge, so that you can manifest your prowess! By my speech and my experience I will do what is agreeable to you. I shall make the concern of the son of Dasaratha my concern, do not doubt it. Possessed as you are of intelligence, energy and wisdom, incapable of being overcome even by the Gods, you have been sent here by the King of the Monkeys. The arrows of Rama and Lakshmana furnished with heron plumes are able to destroy the Three Worlds. Although the ten-necked Ravana is endowed with strength and energy, yet assuredly none can resist your united efforts! There is no need for further delay. Now accomplish your purpose. The wise, such as you, are not dilatory in their undertakings."

CHAPTER 60

The Story of the Ascetic Nishakara

WHEN the vulture had offered oblations of water for the spirit of his brother and performed his ablutions, the monkey chiefs sat down on that marvellous mountain, placing him in their midst.

Then Sampati, in order to reassure them, said cheerfully to Angada, who was seated surrounded by all the monkeys who escorted him:—"Listen to me with attention and in silence, O Monkeys, and I will tell you truly how I came to know of Maithili.

"A long time ago, I fell on the summit of the Vindhya Mountain, O Irreproachable Prince, my wings scorched by the heat of the sun, which consumed them with its rays. On regaining consciousness at the end of six days, faint and bereft of strength, looking round, I was unable to distinguish anything. Nevertheless on scanning the lakes, rocks, rivers, ponds, woods and countries, my memory returned and I reflected, 'This

mountain filled with cheerful birds, containing deep caves and innumerable ridges is certainly the Vindhya Peak on the shores of the southern sea.'

"Here lay a sacred hermitage revered by the Gods themselves, where a Sage named Nishakara, of severe austerities, dwelt; since that time, that saint conversant with virtue has ascended to heaven.

"I passed eight thousand years on this mountain. Then not having seen that ascetic, crawling slowly and painfully down from that high peak to the ground covered with sharp pointed grass, eager to see that sage, I rejoined him with great difficulty. Formerly Jatayu and I visited that sage many times.

"In that neighbourhood, soft and fragrant breezes blew and there was no tree without flowers or fruit. Approaching that sacred hermitage, desirous of seeing the blessed Nishakara, I waited at the foot of a tree. Then, at a distance, I beheld that Ṛishi, blazing with effulgence, who, having performed his ablutions, was returning towards the north.

"As all living beings surround a giver, so was he surrounded by bears, srimaras, tigers, lions and snakes of various kinds. And when they observed that the saint had entered his hermitage, they all went away, as when a king retires, the ministers who have escorted him withdraw.

"The Sage, on seeing me, was pleased, and retiring into his hermitage for a while, came out again and enquired as to my welfare. He said:—'O My Friend, on account of thy discoloured plumes, I am unable to recognize thee; thy two wings have been scorched by fire and thy frail frame is shaken by gasps. In former times, I knew two vultures resembling the wind in speed, who were brothers, able to change their shape at will. Thou art, I know, the elder, Sampati, and Jatayu is thy younger brother. Both assuming human shape were wont to massage my feet with their hands.

"'By what disease hast thou been afflicted? From whence comes the loss of thy wings? Who has inflicted this punishment on thee? Do thou tell me all!'"

CHAPTER 61

Sampati tells his Story to the Sage Nishakara

THEREUPON Sampati related to the ascetic the whole of his fearful, arduous and rash act of flying towards the sun :—

" O Blessed One, the wounds I have received, the shame I feel and the exhaustion I experience, all prevent me from entering into a lengthy narrative.

" From pride in our power of flight, Jatayu and I, in order to test each other's powers, vowing in the presence of the sages on Mt. Kailasha that we would follow the sun till it set behind the Astachala Mountain, flew into the sky. Reaching a great height together, we looked down on the earth with its various cities that appeared like chariot wheels. Sometimes the sound of musical instruments reached us, at others the tinkling of ornaments. In certain places we saw many damsels clad in red who were singing.

" Passing rapidly through the air, we followed the path of the sun and observed a forest intersected with green rides ; the mountains appeared like pebbles and the rivers like threads binding the earth ; Himavat, Vindhya and that mighty mountain, Meru resembled elephants standing in a pond.

" Nevertheless we were perspiring freely and were filled with anxiety and extremely fatigued, no longer being able, in our bewilderment, to distinguish between the south, west or the quarter presided over by Fire ; the earth seemed to us to have been consumed by flames, as at the end of the world period. My mind and my eyes failing, with a violent effort I fixed them on the sun and with great difficulty succeeded in doing so. The blazing orb seemed to us much larger than the earth in extent, and at that instant, Jatayu, without speaking to me, began to fall. Seeing this, I flew down from the sky and covered him with my wings, in consequence of which my brother was not burnt, but I, in my arrogance was scorched and thrown out of the wind's course. I surmised that Jatayu had fallen in

Janasthana, but my wings scathed, deprived of strength, I fell on the Vindhya Mountain.

"Bereft of my dominion, my brother, my wings and my power, I now long to hurl myself headlong from the summit of this mountain and put an end to my existence."

CHAPTER 62

Sampati learns where Sita is from the Sage Nishakara

"HAVING spoken thus to that foremost of Sages, in my distress, I began to weep, and that blessed One, reflecting for a while, said to me:—

"'Thy two wings with their feathers will grow again and thou wilt recover thy sight, thine energy and thy prowess. Having learnt it from the Puranas and foreseen it by mine ascetic power, I know that a great event is about to take place.

"'It concerns a certain king, named Dasaratha of the race of Ikshwaku, to whom a son, full of valour, will be born by the name of Rama. He will repair to the forest with his brother Lakshmana, having been constrained to do so by his sire.

"'The son of Nairriti, Ravana, the King of the Titans, incapable of being slain by Gods or Danavas, will bear off his consort from the forest of Janasthana. And, albeit tempted by delicious viands and objects of enjoyment and desire, that noble and illustrious one, overcome by grief, will not partake of them. Then Vasava learning of this will offer her 'payasa' resembling ambrosia that the Gods themselves only obtain with difficulty. Receiving this food, Maithili, knowing it to come from Indra, will offer part of it to Rama, by pouring it on the ground, saying: —'Whether my husband or his younger brother still live or have attained the celestial state, may this food be acceptable to them.'

"'Rama's envoys having been sent hither, it will be for thee to inform them of the facts relating to Sita, O Airy Traveller! Do not go hence for any reason, but whither canst thou go in this condition? Wait for the time and place; thou shalt recover thy wings. I am able this very day to furnish thee with

wings but by waiting here thou canst render a service to the worlds. Even so, thou shalt be doing thy duty to the two princes, the brahmins, thy spiritual preceptors, the sages and Indra. I also am desirous of beholding the two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, after which I shall yield up my life.'

" Thus did that great Rishi, conversant with the nature of all things, speak to me."

CHAPTER 63

The Wings of Sampati grow once more

" HAVING consoled me with these words and many others, the eloquent ascetic took leave of me and re-entered his hermitage. Thereafter I crawled slowly out of the cave and scaled the Vindhya Mountain to wait for you. Since that time, a whole century has passed, and, keeping the words of that hermit in my heart, I await the time and place.

" Nishakara has ascended to heaven and I, distracted by many thoughts, have been consumed with grief. When the idea of death comes to me, I put it away, remembering the words of the Sage. The determination he inspired in me to preserve my life dissolves my distress, as a flame in a lit brazier dispels the darkness.

" Though fully conversant with the power of the evil-hearted Ravana, yet I approached my son saying :—' Hearing her lamentations and knowing these two princes to be deprived of her, how is it that thou didst not free Sita ? ' In my affection for King Dasaratha I was displeased with my son."

As Sampati was speaking thus to the monkeys, his wings suddenly began to grow again in the presence of those dwellers in the woods. Thereupon seeing his body covered with tawny feathers, he experienced an immense joy and said to those monkeys :—" By the grace of Nishakara, that Sage of immeasurable power, my wings, that had been scorched by the sun's rays, have grown again and the prowess I possessed in my youth has returned. To-day I have regained my strength

and vigour. Do you spare no effort to find Sita; the recovery of my wings is a pledge of your success."

Having spoken thus to the monkeys, Sampati, the foremost of birds, anxious to ascertain his powers of flight, flew up to the mountain top. Hearing his words, those mighty monkeys were delighted and confident of their success, prepared to demonstrate their valour.

With the speed of the wind those foremost of monkeys, intent upon finding Sita, the daughter of Janaka, set out towards the south to the quarter dominated by Abhijit.[1]

CHAPTER 64

The Monkeys are disconcerted at the sight of the Ocean

THUS informed by the King of the Vultures, the monkeys, endowed with the strength of lions, began to leap about, emitting cries of delight.

Hearing from Sampati that Ravana would be slain, the happy monkeys reached the sea, anxious to discover Sita. And coming to that place, those redoubtable warriors beheld the ocean, the mirror of the whole world.

Arriving at the northern side of the southern sea, those exceedingly powerful and heroic monkeys halted there. And seeing the ocean which at times appeared to be asleep, at others playful, sometimes covered with huge waves and thronged with aquatic animals, causing their hair to stand on end, those foremost of monkeys were amazed and became despondent. Beholding that ocean incapable of being traversed, even as the sky itself, the monkeys began to lament, crying: "What is now to be done?"

Then the foremost of the monkeys, the mighty Angada, seeing the despair of the army at the sight of the sea, began to reassure those warriors afflicted with terror, saying:—

"One should never give way to agitation, of all things it is

[1] Abhijit—the name of a constellation. Some Commentators translate it as meaning "he who is to be conquered" implying the region in which Ravana was to be found.

the most fatal: agitation destroys a man even as a provoked serpent doth a child. He who, when the time is ripe for displaying his valour, becomes agitated, will grow weak and fail to attain his object."

The night having passed, Angada took counsel with the older monkeys, and that monkey host surrounding him resembled the hosts of the Maruts surrounding Vasava. Who, save Bali's son or Hanuman was capable of maintaining discipline amongst those troops?

Having called the elders together in company with the army, the fortunate Angada, the subduer of his foes, saluting them, spoke words fraught with good sense, saying:—

"Who amongst you is of sufficient stature to cross the ocean? Who is able to carry out the commands of Sugriva, the conqueror of his foes? Which valiant monkey can leap the four hundred miles and deliver the leaders of the monkeys from their great anxiety? By whose favour shall we, crowned with success and content, return and behold our wives, our sons and our homes? Who will enable us to meet Rama, the mighty Lakshmana and that dweller in the woods, Sugriva, with a light heart? If there be any monkey capable of leaping over the ocean, then may he show his blessed form to us and deliver us from fear!'

Hearing Angada's speech, no one uttered a word and the entire monkey host appeared stunned. Then that foremost of monkeys once more addressed them saying:—

"O Ye Excellent Warriors, of tried valour, unimpeachable family and worthy of honour, say how far each of you is able to leap over the sea without any being able to hinder you!"

CHAPTER 65

The Leaders of the Monkeys each state what they are able to accomplish

HAVING listened to Angada's words, those Chiefs of Monkeys, each in turn, began to dilate on what he was able to accomplish—Gaya, Gavaksha, Gavaya, Sharabha, Gandhamadana, Mainda,

Dvivida and Angada as also Jambavan. Gaya speaking first, said :—

"I can leap a hundred miles!" and Gavaksha said :—"I can leap two hundred!" Then the monkey Sharabha said to his companions :—"I am able to leap three hundred miles, O Monkeys!" thereafter Rishabha said, "I can undoubtedly cross over four hundred miles!" and the mighty Gandhamadana said "I can leap five hundred miles!" In his turn the monkey, Mainda, said "And I, six hundred miles" and the illustrious Dvivida "Without difficulty I can leap over seven hundred miles!" Then Sushena, full of energy, the best of monkeys said, "I declare that I can leap eight hundred miles!"

And as they were speaking thus, the oldest of them, Jambavan, offering salutations to them all, spoke in this wise:—"Formerly I, also, had the power of motion but now I am advanced in years. Nevertheless in the present situation, nothing should be overlooked to assure the success of both Rama's and the King of Monkeys' mission: I shall therefore leap three hundred miles. There is no doubt whatever about this." Then Jambavan, addressing all those monkeys, added: "Alas! I have assuredly not the strength for that! Of old, I circumambulated the eternal Vishnu when he covered the world in three strides at the sacrifice of Virochana's son; now, however, I am old and tire quickly. When I was young, my energy was great and unmatched; to-day, I can only go as far as I have told you, which is not sufficient to bring success to our undertaking."

Thereupon the sagacious Angada, bowing to that mighty monkey, addressed him in pregnant words, saying: "I am able to leap these four hundred miles easily but should I be able to return? Nothing is certain!"

Thereat Jambavan answered that excellent monkey and said: "O Foremost of Monkeys, thy power of motion is well known, but art thou able to cross over eight hundred miles?[1] It is not fitting that thou shouldst do so. My Dear Son, the master must in no way be commanded by his servants; it is for thee to order this expedition. Thou art our leader and our only good. The head of the army is, as it were, the wife, who should constantly be protected; this is thy rôle, O Dear Child. One

[1] That is, there and back.

should take care of the root of a thing, this is the practice of men of experience; the root being sound, the juices that have for their purpose the maturing of the fruit will be safeguarded. Thou art the essential part of this undertaking and, O Subduer of Thy Foes, thou, furnished with wisdom and valour, art the principle underlying it. Thou art our superior and the son of our superior, O Excellent One; with thy support we shall be able to accomplish our mission."

Thus, in his great wisdom, Jambavan spoke and that mighty monkey born of Bali, Angada, answered him saying :—

" If I do not go nor any among these powerful monkeys does so, then undoubtedly we must begin our supreme fast once more, for if we return without having fulfilled the commands of that lord of the monkeys, then I do not see how we can hope to preserve our lives. Whether he show clemency or wrath, he is the chief of the monkeys and to disregard his will means death. In this matter no other alternative is possible; therefore it is for you who are able to see clearly to reflect upon it."

Thus spoke Angada and that powerful and heroic monkey, Jambavan, answered him in felicitous words saying :—

" O Warrior, this mission will be carried out without obstruction! I will call on the one who is able to accomplish it."

Thereupon that heroic monkey sent for the foremost of the apes, Hanuman, who was sitting tranquilly apart.

CHAPTER 66

Jambavan appeals to Hanuman to sacrifice himself for the good of all

PERCEIVING the discouragement of that great army composed of hundreds and thousands of monkeys, Jambavan said to Hanuman :—

" O Warrior, foremost among the multitude, thou who art versed in the scriptures, why art thou sitting apart, silent? In courage and strength, thou art the equal of Rama and Lakshmana and of the King of the Monkeys himself, O Hanuman!

" Arishtanemi's[1] son, the mighty Vainateya, the illustrious Garuda is the foremost of all winged creatures. Many a time I have seen that all-powerful bird of immense wings and exceeding energy bearing away serpents from the ocean ; the strength that is in his wings resembles the might and vigour of thine arms; none can withstand thee. Thine energy, intelligence, courage and loyalty sets thee apart from the rest of beings, therefore prepare thyself to cross the ocean.

" The most noble of all the Apsaras, Punjika-Thala, under the name of Anjana, became the wife of the monkey Kesarin. She was renowned in the three worlds and her beauty was unequalled on earth. As a result of a curse, O Friend, she was born in the monkey race, able to change her form at will.

" Once that daughter of the king among the monkeys, Kunjara, having assumed the form of a woman radiant with youth and beauty, adorned with garlands of various kinds, clad in silk, was wandering about on the summit of a mountain, which resembled a mass of clouds in the rainy season.

" And it happened that the God of the Wind stole away the red-bordered yellow robe of that large-eyed maiden, who stood on the mountain top. Then Maruta perceived her rounded, well-proportioned thighs and her breasts touching each other and her amiable and pleasing mien. Beholding that youthful woman of lovely limbs and slender waist, her whole being radiant with beauty, he was filled with desire and beside himself, enveloping that irreproachable lady in his arms, Manmatha embraced her.

" In her distress, Anjana, faithful to her conjugal vows, cried out :—' Who desires to sever the ties of a woman devoted to her lord ? ' Hearing these words, the Wind-God answered, ' I do not wish to wrong thee, O Lady of Lovely Hips, let not thy heart be troubled. By embracing thee and entering into thee thou shalt bear a son endowed with strength and intelligence, of immense energy, of noble nature, possessed of vigour and courage and in agility and speed equal to myself.'

" These words pleased thy mother and she gave birth to thee in a cave, O Foremost of Monkeys.

[1] Arishtanemi—A name of Garuda meaning " the felly of whose wheel is unscathed ".

" While still a child, thou didst see the sun rise over the great forest and taking it to be a fruit sought to seize it. Bounding into the air, thou didst mount up for a thousand yojanas, O Great Monkey and, though the burning rays of the sun beat upon thee, thou didst not falter. Seeing thee rushing through space, Indra, full of wrath, hurled this thunderbolt at thee, whereupon, falling, thou didst fracture thy left jaw on the point of a rock from which arises thy name, Hanuman.[1] Observing thee in this state, Vayu the Destroyer, the Bearer of Fragrance,[2] in the height of anger, ceased to blow throughout the Three Worlds.

" Then all the Gods were distressed on account of the calamity that has befallen the worlds and these Lords of the Universe sought to pacify the wrathful Wind-god, whereupon Pavana being placated, Brahma accorded thee the boon of invulnerability in combat. Seeing how thou didst sustain the impact of the thunderbolt, that God of a Thousand Eyes was pleased with thee and also conferred an excellent boon on thee, saying :— ' Thou shalt not die till thou desireth to do so ! Thou, endowed with extreme vigour, the son of Kesarin, resembling the Wind God in energy, art born of his loins and equal to him in speed '. O Friend, we are lost, but thou, possessed of skill and courage, art in our midst a second Lord of the Monkeys.

" In the time when Vishnu covered the world with three strides, I, O Child, circumambulated the earth with its mountains, forests and woods, one and twenty times. Then commissioned by the Gods, we gathered all the herbs which (when cast into the sea) produced the nectar of immortality and at that time our strength was great. Now I am old and my prowess has deserted me, but thou, endowed with every virtue art amongst us. Employ thy valour, O Hero, for thou are most fitted to do so. Bestir thyself and cross the vast ocean, O Redoubtable Monkey ; the entire monkey host is eager to behold thy prowess. Arise and leap over the mighty sea, for thou surpasseth all beings in motion. Canst thou remain indifferent to the despair of all the monkeys ? Put forth thy strength, as did Vishnu when traversing the Three Worlds with three strides, O Lion among Monkeys ! "

[1] Hanuman—" He of the fractured jaw ".

[2] The Wind-god.

Thus exhorted by the foremost of monkeys, Hanuman, renowned for his great might, the son of the Wind, assumed a form preparatory to crossing the sea that gladdened the hearts of those monkeys.

CHAPTER 67

Hanuman prepares to go to Lanka

SEEING that extremely agile leader of monkeys stretching himself in preparation for crossing the four hundred miles of sea, the monkeys, renouncing all despondency, were filled with delight and began to shout and praise the heroism of Hanuman.

And, struck with amazement, beings from every sphere rejoiced unitedly, even as when they beheld the Lord Himself displaying his powers, when taking the three strides.

Thus acclaimed, the mighty Hanuman expanded in size and waved his tail in pleasure, demonstrating his strength. Applauded by the older monkeys and filled with energy, he assumed an unparalleled shape, like a lion that stretches himself at the mouth of a rocky cavern, and that Son of Maruta began to yawn and the mouth of that intelligent monkey resembled a blazing brazier or a smokeless fire.

Rising in the midst of those monkeys, his hair standing on end for joy, he paid obeisance to the older leaders and said to them :—

" I am the son of him who shatters the mountain peaks and is the friend of fire, the mighty and incommensurable Vayu, who circulates in space, Maruta, of impetuous bounds, rapid pace and great soul. A thousand times am I able without pausing, to encircle Meru, that colossus that seems to lick the heavens. With my strong arms, churning up the sea, I can inundate the world with its mountains, rivers and lakes ; with my thighs and legs, I can cause the ocean, the abode of Varuna with its great denizens, to overflow. I can encircle Vainateya, revered by all, who feeds on serpents, a thousand times while he courses once through space. What is more, I am able to reach the sun which rises in glory crowned with rays, before it sinks in the west and return without touching the earth. I can leap beyond the

stars and planets, suck up the ocean and rive the earth; I can shatter the mountains with my bounds and in the immeasurable energy of my leaping I can cause the sea to overflow. When I mount into the sky, flowers from countless shrubs and trees will be borne away by me on my aerial course this day and studded with flowers my path shall resemble the Milky Way.

"And, O Monkeys, all beings shall behold me coursing through the air, encompassing the firmament, now rising, now descending, as it were devouring space. I shall scatter the clouds, shatter the mountains and dry up the ocean with my constant leaping. My powers are equal to the eagle's or the wind; I know of none that surpasses the King of the Birds, the Wind-god or myself. In the twinkling of an eye, I shall float through the air like lightning from a cloud. While crossing the sea, my form will resemble Vishnu's taking his three strides. My heart foretells that I shall encounter Vaidehi, therefore rejoice. Equal to Maruta in motion and Garuda in speed, I shall cover ten thousand miles; this is my firm conviction. I am able to wrest the 'amrita' from Indra, armed with his thunderbolt or from Brahma himself. Be assured, that having turned Lanka upside down, I shall return!"

That monkey of immeasurable vigour roared thus, and astounded, the monkeys gazed on him with joy; and hearing those words that dissipated the distress of his kindred, that foremost of monkeys, Jambavan, transported with delight, said:—"O Hero! O Son of Kesarin! O Offspring of the Wind! Thou hast dispelled the immense anxiety of thy fellows, and these foremost of monkeys assembled here will perform acts tending to thy welfare. By the grace of the Sages, the approval of our elders and the blessing of our spiritual preceptors do thou cross the ocean. We will stand on one foot awaiting thy return. On thee depend the lives of all the inhabitants of the woods!"

Then that tiger of the monkeys said to those rangers of the woods:—"None in this world will be able to sustain the force of my leaping. Here is the mountain Mahendra with its compact mass of rocks and high escarpments, it is from its summit that I shall spring. With its trees of varied fragrance that cover it and its many crags, it will be able to bear my weight, when I prepare to leap over four hundred miles."

With these words that monkey, the scourge of his foes, born of Maruta, whose equal he was, scaled that monarch of mountains, carpeted with flowers of every kind and grassy swards ranged by deer, containing flowering creepers and trees laden with fruit and blossoms, frequented by lions and tigers and herds of intoxicated elephants maddened with ichor; there flocks of birds trilled and waterfalls tumbled on every side.

Ascending that mountain, that foremost of monkeys, equal to Mahendra in power, began to wander from one crest to another and crushed between the arms of that high-souled one, that great mountain emitted a loud clamour, like a mighty elephant that has been attacked by a lion and waters gushed out from the scattered rocks and deer and elephants were seized with fear, whilst the giant trees shook.

Its spacious uplands were deserted by the pairs of Gandharvas engaged in drinking and dalliance, the birds flew away and the bands of Vidyadharas fled from the high plateaus; the huge serpents hid themselves in terror and the cliffs and spars broke away. With its serpents hissing, their bodies half issuing from their holes, the mountain shone, as if decorated by pennants. The Rishis in fear and agitation fled from that support of the earth so that it resembled a wayfarer in a vast forest, deserted by his companions.

And that agile and valiant monkey, endowed with great speed, the destroyer of his foes, filled with an exalted purpose, had already reached Lanka in thought.

END OF KISHKINDHA KANDA

BOOK V.

SUNDARA KANDA

CHAPTER I

The Departure of Hanuman

THEN that Scourge of His Foes, Hanuman, prepared to follow the path of the Charanas[1] in quest of the place to which Sita had been borne away by Ravana.

Desirous of accomplishing this difficult feat without hindrance, impossible to any other, that powerful monkey, stretching out his head and neck like a bull, frightening the birds, uprooting the trees with his breast and destroying innumerable creatures, like a lion overflowing with energy joyfully bounded over the grassy slopes resembling the sea.

On that mountain plateau, frequented by the Chiefs of the Serpent Race, embellished by blue, red, yellow, rose and various coloured metals, thronged with Celestial Beings, Yakshas, Kinneras and Gandharvas, able to change their form at will, that foremost of monkeys stood like a Naga in a lake.

Then, having paid homage to the Sun-god, Mahendra, Pavana, Swyambhu and all beings, he prepared to set out on his journey. Turning towards the east and saluting his sire, the resourceful Hanuman, having resolved to cross the ocean to fulfil Rama's purpose, in order to reach the southern region, expanded his body under the eyes of the leaders of the monkeys, as the sea increases under the full moon.

Assuming an immense stature, desirous of traversing the ocean, he pressed the mountain with his hands and feet and that immoveable peak shook under his weight and all the blossom from the tops of the trees fell in a shower wholly covering it with a mass of fragrant blooms.

Under the extreme pressure of that monkey's weight, water gushed forth from the mountain like ichor from the temples of an elephant in rut. Trampled underfoot by that mighty forest

[1] Path of the Charanas or the Path of the Wind—His sire being the Wind-God.

dweller, the mountain let loose innumerable streams of gold, silver and collyrium and, from that rocky mass, enormous boulders detached themselves containing red arsenic so that it resembled a brazier wreathed in smoke.

Crushed on every side by the monkey, those creatures, dwelling in the caverns, bruised and stifled, emitted strange cries and the formidable clamour created by them filled the whole earth and other regions.

Great serpents, rearing their distinctive hoods, vomited fire and bit the rocks with their fangs and those great crags, split by the venom, broke into flames and were shivered into a thousand fragments. The medicinal herbs also, which grew there, were affected by the poison which they were unable to neutralise.

Then the ascetics, terrified, reflecting that the mountain was being riven by great Beings, fled away, as well as the Vidyadharas with their attendant women. Forsaking their golden seats, goblets and precious vessels with the ewers of gold in the feasting hall; abandoning the priceless sauces, wines and viands of every kind and the hides and swords with guards of Kanaka gold; intoxicated, their necks encircled with jewelled chains, adorned with garlands and red sandal paste, their eyes resembling blue lotuses, they rose into the air; and those fair Ones, wearing strings of pearls, rings and bracelets, startled, ascended smiling into the sky, close to their loved ones.

Witnessing this great marvel, Maharishis and Vidyadharas stood in the firmament gazing down on the mountain and they heard those pure-minded ascetics saying: "This Hanuman, born of the Wind, endued with great energy, desirous of crossing the ocean, the abode of Varuna, in order to carry out Rama's purpose and that of the monkeys, is eager to reach the further shore, a most difficult feat."

Hearing the words of the ascetics, the Vidyadharas beheld that foremost of monkeys on the mountain, bristling and quivering like a flame, emitting a great roar like the rumble of thunder. Then raising his tail which twitched convulsively, like a snake shaken by an eagle, he waved it to and fro and, lying curled across his back, it resembled a great serpent borne away by Garuda.

And that monkey, stiffening his arms like unto two immense clubs, girded up his limbs and, crouching down, contracted his neck and arms, summoning up all his strength and courage. Scanning the path he was to take and examining the distance to be covered, he drew in his breath, pressing his two feet firmly on the ground and that elephant among monkeys, Hanuman, flattening his ears, leapt forward and, full of energy, addressed the forest dwellers, saying :

" As an arrow loosed by Raghava flies with the speed of the wind so shall I course to Lanka which is guarded by Ravana. If I fail to find the daughter of Janaka there, I shall repair with the same speed to the region of the Gods, where, if despite mine efforts I do not recover Sita, I shall bring back the King of the Titans in chains. Either, achieving success, I shall return or uprooting Lanka from its foundation, I shall bear it hither, together with Ravana."

With these words, Hanuman, the foremost of monkeys, without pausing for breath, deeming himself to be a second Suparna, sprang into the air and, such was the force of his leap, that the trees growing on the mountain, tossing their branches, were sent spinning on every side.

In his rapid flight, Hanuman bore away those trees with their flowering boughs filled with lapwings intoxicated with love, into the empyrean. Carried away by the impetus of his tremendous bound, those trees followed in his wake, like relatives accompanying their dear one setting out on a journey to a far country. Uprooted by the force of his motion, Sala and other forest trees followed in Hanuman's wake, like an army its leader. Surrounded by countless trees, the crests of which were laden with blossom, the monkey Hanuman, resembling a glorious mountain, was wonderful to behold. And those great trees, full of sap, fell into the sea, as formerly the mountains in fear of Indra plunged into Varuna's abode.

Covered with flowers of every kind, as well as young shoots and buds, that monkey shone like a cloud or a hill aglow with fireflies. Torn away by his leaping, those trees, scattering their blossom here and there, plunged into the sea, like friends who, having escorted one of their company, return. Borne away in their fragility by the wind produced by the monkey's impetuous

flight, which had detached them from their stems, the multi-coloured flowers fell into the sea.

Covered with a drift of fragrant blooms of diverse tints, that monkey, in his flight, resembled a mass of clouds embellished by lightning and the waters strewn with the blossom of his leap, looked like the firmament when the enchanting stars appear. His two arms outstretched in space, resembled two five-headed serpents issuing from the summit of a mountain.

Sometimes that mighty monkey seemed to be drinking up the ocean with the multitudinous waves and sometimes it seemed as if he would swallow the sky itself. As he thus followed the wind's path, his eyes, shining like lightning, sparkled like two fires that have been kindled on a mountain.

The eyes of that tawny-hued one resembled the sun and moon in juxtaposition, and his coppery nose lent his countenance the same hue as the solar orb at the approach of dusk ; his uplifted tail caused that offspring of the wind to appear like the raised banner of Indra. With his coiled tail and white teeth, that exceedingly sagacious son of Anila, Hanuman, shone like the star of day encircled by a halo of rays and his plump form, of a coppery hue, caused him to resemble a mountain which is being excavated for its deposits of red ochre. Bounding over the waters, the air imprisoned in the armpits of that leonine monkey, emitted a sound like thunder.

As in space, a meteor from a higher region rushes through the skies so did that elephant of monkeys appear or like a great bird soaring into the air or a great tusker tightly-bound by a girth, whilst the reflection of his body cast on the deep resembled a vessel foundering in a storm.

Wherever that great monkey passed, the sea rose tumultuously under the force of his bounds and, rushing on with extreme speed, with his breast like a great prow, he caused the salty sea to surge mountainously. Pushing those high heaving billows before him, that lion among monkeys seemed to be separating heaven and earth ; the waves that rose up resembled Mount Meru and Mandara and, breasted by him in his impetuous course, the waters lashed by his speed, overspread the sky like autumnal clouds. Whales, crocodiles, huge fish and turtles were uncovered in turn, like the limbs of one shedding his

attire, and sea serpents, beholding that lion among monkeys travelling through space took him to be Suparna himself.

The shadow of that great monkey, forty miles in extent and thirty wide, grew larger in the rapidity of his flight and, resembling a mass of white clouds, falling on the salty waters, looked exceedingly beautiful. That supremely illustrious and mighty monkey of vast body appeared like a winged mountain as he followed his aerial path without rest.

Wherever that mighty elephant among the monkeys passed, the sea was instantly transformed into a fountain and, following the path of the birds, Hanuman, like the King of the feathered tribe, thrust aside the massed clouds like the Wind-god himself. Great clouds, red, blue, pale or dark, scattered by the monkey's flight, looked exceedingly beautiful and he, now entering into them, sometimes hidden sometimes visible, resembled the moon.

Seeing that Plavaga[1] coursing with such speed, the Gods, Gandharvas and Danavas began to rain flowers on him and, as he sailed on, the sun refrained from tormenting him and the wind ministered to him for the sake of Rama's enterprise.

Then the Rishis praised that dweller of the woods as he was coursing through the sky and the Gods and Gandharvas extolled him in song. Seeing him bounding in space, Nagas, Yakshas and Rakshasas of various races lauded that excellent monkey and the ocean, ever solicitous for the honour of the House of Ikshwaku, reflected :—" If I do not lend assistance to this Lord of Monkeys, I shall be an object of obloquy to all those gifted with speech; was I not reared by Sagara, the foremost of the race of Ikshwaku? This monkey is their counsellor, it is therefore incumbent on me not to let him perish in the waves. It behoves me to act in such wise that he may rest and, thus relieved by me, he will happily traverse the remaining way."

In this magnanimous thought, the sea addressed that most excellent of mountains, the golden-hued Mainaka, which was covered by waves, saying :—

" Thou hast been placed here by the King of the Celestials, as a rampart against the Asuras inhabiting the nether regions.

[1] Plavaga.—One who moves by leaps and bounds.

Their power is well known and, lest they rise up anew from that hell of immeasurable dimensions, thou art here to prevent their escape. Nevertheless thou art able to move upwards and downwards and from side to side. I command thee, therefore, O Best of Mountains, to rise up. That lion among monkeys, performer of mighty exploits, engaged in Rama's service, overcome with fatigue is passing over thee; thou art witness of his exertions, now lift thyself up ! "

Hearing the Ocean's words, the golden-breasted Mountain Mainaka with its tall trees and creepers, instantly rose from its watery bed and, as the sun with its burning rays divides the cloud, that great mountain, which the waters had concealed, on Sagara's request, exposed its golden peaks inhabited by Kinneras and great serpents, shimmering like the sun at dawn, as if it were licking the skies. The summits of that high mountain, shining like a sword, possessed the brilliance of gold and its gilded crests emitted a dazzling light lending it the lustre of a thousand suns.

Beholding that mountain suddenly emerge before him from the middle of the sea, Hanuman reflected : ' This is an obstacle ', and that mighty and impetuous monkey crushed that stony mass with his breast as the wind scatters the clouds ; then that foremost of mountains, recognizing the power of Hanuman, shouted for joy. Thereupon, assuming the form of a man, stationing himself on his own summit, with a glad heart he addressed Hanuman saying :—

" O Most Excellent of Forest Dwellers, thou hast undertaken an arduous task, take thine ease on my crest and continue without fatigue. The ocean king was born in the House of Raghu and, seeing thee engaged on Rama's behalf, offers obeisance to thee. To render service for service is the divine decree. Desirous of serving Raghu's race, he is worthy of thy consideration. To do thee honour, the Sea God adjured me thus :—

" ' Traversing a hundred yojanas through the air, this monkey is worn out by his exertions, let him rest awhile on thy summit and continue his way without fatigue.' Do thou therefore remain here, O Best of Monkeys and repose thyself. Having feasted on these many sweet and fragrant fruits and roots,

proceed on thy course at thy leisure. O Foremost of Monkeys. the sum of thy virtues is well-known in the Three Worlds. O Son of the Wind, of all the Plavagas who abound in energy, I esteem thee to be the chief, O Lion among Monkeys ! Even an ordinary man is honoured as a guest by one conversant with his duty, how much more one such as thou ? Thou art the Son of Maruta, the Foremost of the Celestials and dost equal him in speed, O Best of Monkeys ! In honouring thee, who art conversant with virtue, one is honouring thy sire, therefore thou dost merit my reverence. Hearken, there is a further reason for this :

" In olden times, Dear Child, the mountains, endowed with wings, began to range the four quarters with the speed of Garuda, and journeying thus, the companies of Celestials, ascetics and other Beings trembled with fear lest they should fall. Then, highly enraged, the God of a Thousand Eyes, the performer of an hundred sacrifices severed the wings of those hundreds and thousands of mountains with his thunderbolt.

" When, full of wrath, the Lord of the Celestials approached me, brandishing his mace, I was suddenly swept away by that high-souled Wind-god. O Foremost of Monkeys, I was thus cast into the salty waves and, retaining my wings, was preserved unhurt by thine ancestor. On account of this, thou art an object of adoration to me and this is the powerful bond which unites us, O Chief of the Monkeys. The time for honouring the benefit conferred having come, it behoves thee to accord this felicity to the Ocean and myself, O Illustrious One ! Repose thyself therefore and accept our homage, who are worthy of thy respect, O Venerable Hanuman ! Happy am I to see thee here ! "

Thus accosted by Mainaka, the foremost of mountains, that excellent monkey answered, saying :—" I am grateful for thy welcome but time presses and I have vowed not to rest on the way ; day is declining, let nothing disturb thy serenity."

Then, touching the mountain with his hand, that lion among monkeys, smiling, sailed on through the air, whereupon the mountain and the ocean offered him their respect and gave him their blessings. Rising high into the sky, he looked down on the mountain and the vast ocean and proceeded unsupported in the pathway of the wind.

Seeing Hanuman achieve this difficult feat, the Celestial Beings and the ascetics acclaimed him; then the Gods present, in their turn, applauded the action of that golden mountain of beautiful slopes, as did Indra, the Thousand-eyed Deity also, and supremely gratified, the consort of Sachi paid homage to that illustrious mountain personally, saying :—

" O Lord of Mountains, I am extremely pleased with thee! I grant thee full security, proceed therefore where thou desirest, O Friend. Thou hast fearlessly offered assistance to Hanuman, who was exhausted after crossing four hundred miles of sea, despite every hazard. It is on Rama's behalf, the Son of King Dasaratha, that the monkey has undertaken this journey and thou hast welcomed him to the best of thy power, I am well pleased with thee!"

Beholding the King of the Gods, Shatakratu highly gratified, that foremost of mountains experienced supreme felicity and having received that boon from Indra, resumed its former place. Then Hanuman, in a short space, sped over the sea.

Thereupon the Gods, Gandharvas and Siddhas with the ascetics called upon Surasa, the Mother of Serpents, who resembled the sun, saying :—

" The effulgent Son of the Wind is crossing the main, it is for thee to delay him awhile Assuming the form of a terrible Rakshasi, as high as a mountain, with monstrous jaws and coppery eyes, do thou reach up to the sky. We desire to test his strength and measure his fortitude to see if he is able to overcome thee or if he retires discomfited."

At these words, Surasa, having been honoured by the Gods, rose from the ocean in the form of a female demon, deformed and hideous, inspiring terror in all beings and, staying Hanuman in his flight, addressed him saying :—

" O Foremost of Monkeys, thou hast been destined by the Lords of the World to be my food, I am about to devour thee, do thou enter my mouth! This boon was formerly granted to me by Dhatar."

With these words she opened her vast mouth wide, placing herself in Maruti's path.

Having listened to Surasa's speech, Hanuman, smiling, answered her :—

" Rama, the Son of Dasaratha, who retired to the Dandaka forest with Lakshmana his brother, and Vaidehi his consort, as a result of a certain exploit, became the enemy of the demons. His beloved wife, the illustrious Sita was subsequently carried away by Ravana. I have been sent to her on Rama's behalf, to whom thou shouldst proffer assistance, O Thou who inhabitest his dominion. Having found Maithili and rejoined Rama, whose deeds are memorable, I shall return and enter thy mouth, this I promise thee in good faith."

Thus addressed by Hanuman, Surasa, who was able to change her form at will, answered :—" None shall pass me alive, this is the boon I have received." Then seeing him continue on his way, the Mother of Serpents added :—" I have received this favour from Brahma, first enter my mouth then go thy way."

Thereafter, extending her capacious jaws, she placed herself in front of Maruti. Surasa's words incensed that lion among monkeys and he said :—

" Open thy mouth wide enough to swallow me." Having said this in anger, Surasa extended her jaws to the width of forty miles and Hanuman increased his girth accordingly ; thereat Surasa enlarged her mouth to fifty miles, and seeing the jaws of Surasa wide open with its long tongue, terrible to look upon, resembling a mountain, measuring fifty miles, Hanuman enlarged himself to that extent also. Then Surasa increased her mouth to sixty miles and the heroic Hanuman to seventy, whereupon Surasa widened her jaws to eighty miles, and Hanuman, resembling Fire[1] itself, to ninety miles. Then Surasa enlarged her mouth to the extent of an hundred miles and Hanuman, reducing his body like a cloud to the size of a thumb's breadth entered into her mouth and, re-emerging from it, standing in space, addressed her saying :—

" O Dakshayani, salutations to thee, I have entered thy mouth, now I go to seek out Vaidehi. Thy boon has been honoured ! "

Seeing Hanuman emerging from her mouth like the moon from the mouth of Rahu, that goddess, assuming her own form, said to the monkey :—

" Go, O Best of Monkeys ! Accomplish thy mission. Thou

[1] Lit. : The Fire-god.

hast done well, O Friend! Now restore Sita to the magnanimous Raghava!"

Seeing this third supremely difficult feat accomplished by Hanuman, all beings extolled that monkey, crying: 'Excellent! Excellent!' paying obeisance to him; and he, flying into the sky, with the speed of Garuda, went on across the sea, the abode of Varuna, coursing through the air which was filled with clouds, where birds ranged and which was frequented by Vidyadharas and shining vehicles drawn by lions, elephants, tigers and winged serpents. And Maruti, scattering the clouds like the wind itself, sailed on like Garuda through that firmament, which was illumined by flashes of lightning, resembling the five fires, inhabited by beings, who, by their merits had conquered heaven, occupied by the Deity of Fire bearing the sacrificial oblations. Adorned by the constellations of planets, the sun, the moon and hosts of stars; thronged with Maharishis, Gandharvas, Nagas and Yakshas; pure, stainless, immense; inhabited by Vishvavasu; trodden by the elephant of the King of the Gods, that orbit of the sun and the moon, the canopy of the world, stretched by Brahma over the earth, was visited by countless heroes and aerial beings.

Mighty clouds, shining with the tints of Kalaguru,[1] red, yellow and black, sparkled with brilliance as they were dispelled by Hanuman and he, penetrating those cloudy battlements, emerged once more as the moon in the rainy season disappears and re-appears in the clouds. Everywhere the son of Maruta could be seen cleaving the air like the King of the Mountains furnished with wings.

Seeing him sailing through space, a female demon of immense size, named Singhika, who was able to change her form at will, said to herself:—'To-day, after a long time, I shall be able to satisfy my hunger! That great creature has appeared in answer to my wish!'

Reflecting thus in her heart, she seized Hanuman's shadow, and he, feeling it held fast, thought: 'My power has suddenly been dissipated like a mighty barque which is retarded in its course by an adverse wind!' Then looking round on every side, Hanuman perceived that immense being rising from the

[1] Kalaguru—Agallochum: A species of sandal paste.

salty waves. Seeing that monster, the Son of the Wind-god, reflected :—' This is without doubt that creature of wonderful form, possessed of exceeding power, given to securing its prey by means of their shadow, who was described to me by the monkey king.' Concluding by her action that it was Singhika, that sagacious monkey expanded his frame to gigantic proportions so that he resembled a mass of cloud during the rains.

When the demon saw the enlarged body of that mighty monkey, she extended her jaws so that they resembled the sky and the nether regions and, roaring like thunder, hurled herself upon him, but marking the proportions of her mouth and the vulnerable parts of her body, that intelligent monkey, hard as a diamond, contracting his limbs, threw himself into her jaws.

And the Siddhas and Charanas beheld him diving into her mouth, disappearing like the moon devoured by Rahu at the time of eclipse. And Hanuman, with his sharp nails tore the entrails of that demon and, with the rapidity of thought, emerged, having slain her by his acuteness, endurance and skill and, having overthrown her, began to expand once more. Thereafter that hero among monkeys suddenly regained his power, whilst Singhika, deprived of life by him, torn asunder, sank into the waves, Swyambhu having created him for her destruction.

Perceiving Singhika speedily overcome by him, all the beings who range the skies addressed that foremost of monkeys saying: " Tremendous is this deed that thou hast performed this day ! Mighty was this monster whom thou hast slain. O Illustrious Monkey, now pursue the purpose dear to thine heart without hindrance. He, who like thee, possesses the four attributes : fixity of purpose, circumspection, wisdom and ability, does not fail in his enterprise O Indra among Monkeys ! "

Honoured by those whose wishes are fulfilled, as he merited to be, that monkey flew into the sky like Garuda, the devourer of serpents. Then, having reached the further shore, Hanuman looking round on every side, observed countless woods a hundred miles distant and, as he went on, that leader of forest dwellers saw an island adorned with trees of various kinds and thickets belonging to the Malaya mountains ; and he surveyed

the sea and the lands bordering it and the trees growing on its shores as also the mouths of the ocean's consorts.[1]

Gazing down on his own body which resembled a great cloud covering the sky that self-contained monkey reflected: "Observing mine immense stature and the rapidity of my flight the demons will be seized with curiosity concerning me."

Thinking thus, in his great prudence, he contracted his body, which was the size of a mountain and assumed his ordinary form as one whose wits have been scattered resumes his normal state. Abandoning his gigantic dimensions, he took on his native form, as did Vishnu, the depriver of Bali's power, when he made the three strides.

Constantly mindful of his mission, Hanuman, who was able to assume various graceful forms, having crossed the sea, a feat not to be accomplished by any other, reduced his body to its former size.

Thereafter that high-souled One, resembling a cloudy pavilion, alighted on the summit of the glorious mountain Samva, of many splendid peaks which was covered with Ketaka, Uddalaka and Narikela trees.

Reaching the shore of the sea, the monkey beholding Lanka on the top of the foremost of mountains, descended, having assumed his native form, causing agitation among the deer and birds.

Through his valour having traversed the ocean heaving with waves and abounding in Danavas and Pannagas, Hanuman, alighting on the further shore, beheld Lanka which resembled the city of Amaravati.

CHAPTER 2

Hanuman's Arrival in Lanka

HAVING crossed the unconquerable sea, that mighty monkey, standing on the summit of the Trikuta Mountain, surveyed

[1] Ocean's Consorts: Probably estuaries.

Lanka and that ape endowed with great prowess was covered by a shower of blossom that fell from the trees on every side, nor did that fortunate monkey, who had just traversed many hundreds of miles of sea without pausing for breath, experience any fatigue.

'I am able to journey many hundreds of miles, what then is this ocean measuring four hundred miles only?' Thus thinking, that foremost of monkeys, endowed with great energy, turned quickly towards Lanka, having crossed the mighty ocean and he passed between green fields and dense thickets fragrant with the scent of honey and traversed the mountainous district covered with trees and blossoming woods. Stationing himself there, the Son of the Wind-god beheld forests and groves and Lanka itself perched on the summit of the mountain.

Sarala, Karnikara, Kharjura trees in full flower with the balmy Priyala, Muchulinda, Kutaja, Ketaka and Priyangu trees heavy with scent; Nipa, Saptachchada, Asana, Kovidara and Karavira trees laden with buds and flowers, whose crests, waving in the wind abounded with birds, were seen by him and ponds filled with swans and waterfowl and carpeted with white and blue lotuses; flower gardens with ornamental fountains and marvellous parks planted with every kind of tree which yielded fruit and flowers in every season.

Drawing nearer to Lanka, which was protected by Ravana, surrounded by a moat embellished with blue and white lotuses, the auspicious Hanuman noted that a strong guard had been placed round it since Sita's abduction; and demons with formidable bows ranged it on every side and that great and marvellous city was encircled by a golden wall, its buildings as high as mountains, resembling autumn clouds.

The main highways were lined with tall white buildings with hundreds of turrets decorated with flying pennants and banners. Most wonderful, with its golden archways festooned with climbing plants, the city of Lanka appeared to Hanuman to be like the city of the Gods. Built on the summit of a mountain, with its palaces of dazzling white, it resembled an aerial city. Constructed by Vishwakarma and ruled by the Lord of the Titans himself, it seemed to that monkey to be suspended in the sky with its ramparts as the thighs, the stretches of water and woods,

the raiment, Shataghnis[1] and spears the hair, the terraces the diadem, Lanka resembled a woman, a creation of Vishwakarma's thought.

Reaching the northern gate resembling Mount Kailasha, which seemed to cleave the skies and support the firmament with its splendid lofty towers and, observing that city thronged with ferocious titans, like a cavern full of venomous snakes, protected by the ocean and, recollecting that terrible adversary, Ravana, the monkey reflected :—

'Even should the mighty armed Raghava succeed in reaching this dread and impregnable city protected by Ravana, what could he do ? It is not possible to enter into negotiations with these demons nor could one win them over by bribes nor succeed in sowing dissension among them nor overcome them in fight. Among the monkeys, only four have power to reach this place—Bali's son, Nila, the sagacious Sugriva, and I. But first let me ascertain if Vaidehi still lives or no ; after seeing Janaka's daughter, I shall consider these matters further.'

Then that elephant among monkeys, stationed on the summit of the mountain, bethought himself how he could discover Sita, the delight of Rama. 'In this shape I shall not be able to enter the city guarded by valiant and ferocious demons nor outwit those warriors full of courage, energy and prowess. In order to find Janaki, I must enter the city by night at a favourable moment, in a form which will not attract attention so that I may carry through this great enterprise.'

Beholding that city, inaccessible even to the Gods and Asuras, Hanuman, sighing deeply, reflected within himself: 'How can I succeed in finding Maithili, the daughter of Janaka, without being discovered by the perfidious Ravana, Lord of the Demons ? How may the work of Rama, who is cognisant of the Self, not be brought to nought ? How may I see the daughter of Janaka alone and in secret ? Undertakings fail in the face of hindrances raised by time and place or through the fault of an incompetent messenger, as darkness is dispelled by the rising sun. When it concerns that which should be undertaken or avoided, the best laid plans may come to nought through the heedlessness of a

[1] See Glossary of Weapons.

messenger nor do they appear in all their splendour; a presumptuous messenger may spoil all!

'How shall I act so that there shall be no incompetence on my part? How may my crossing of the ocean bear fruit? If I am discovered by the demons, the project which the sagacious Rama has formed, who desires the destruction of Ravana, will miscarry. Even if I assume the form of a demon I cannot remain here long without being discovered by them, how much less in some other shape. Even the wind is not able to circulate here unrecognized, I deem. Nothing escapes the vigilance of these formidable titans. If I remain here in my native form, I shall be courting disaster and the purpose of my master will be frustrated, therefore, reducing my size, I shall enter Lanka as a monkey in order to carry through Rama's design. Entering this inaccessible city by night, I shall penetrate into every dwelling in order to find Janaka's daughter.'

Having thus resolved, Hanuman, eager to find Vaidehi, waited for the sun to set.

When the day's orb had sunk behind the Asta Mountain, Maruti reduced his body to the size of a cat, extraordinary to behold and, in the dusk, the mighty Hanuman, springing up, entered that marvellous city traversed by wide streets with rows of houses adorned with golden pillars and balconies, which lent it the appearance of a city of the Gandharvas.

Then he beheld that capital containing seven and eight storied buildings with marble floors inlaid with golden mosaic and golden archways, lending it a great brilliance and, seeing the unimaginable splendour of Lanka, in his eagerness to find Vaidehi, he experienced both sadness and delight.

With its garlands of palaces rivalling each other in whiteness and the arches interlaced with gold of great price, that magnificent city protected by Ravana was encircled by intrepid warriors of great prowess.

And the moon at its full with its flocks of stars seemed to be ministering to Hanuman and, with its myriad rays, filled the worlds with its light. Then that hero among monkeys gazed on the moon shining like a conch-shell, white as milk or a lotus stalk that, floating all luminous in space, resembled a swan swimming on a lake.

CHAPTER 3

Hanuman enters the City

HAVING rested on Mount Samva of lofty summits, that resembled a great cloud, Hanuman, the son of Maruta, that lion among monkeys, confident of his own strength, entered Lanka by night, with its wealth of ravishing groves and waters, guarded by Ravana; that enchanting city with its dazzling palaces resembling autumn clouds, where the sound of the sea could be heard, the breezes of which it inhaled day and night.

Prosperous, surrounded by great forces, resembling Vitapavati with its white gates and decorated arches, protected by infuriated elephants, splendid as Bhogavati filled with huge serpents, similar to the city of Indra, embellished by hosts of stars, resounding to the clamour of blustering winds, encircled by a golden rampart, re-echoing to the pealing of innumerable bells and adorned with banners, that city was approached by Hanuman in exaltation, his heart full of wonder.

And he surveyed it on every side, with its golden gates, the lintels of emerald and the pavements studded with pearls, crystal and gems; with its steps inlaid with precious stones, and floors of lapis lazuli, the grilles of refined gold and parapets of silver; the stairways of crystal that, free from dust, were possessed of emerald treads. And there were charming rooms, which, on account of their elegance, seemed to be built in the air.

The cries of curlews and peacocks could be heard and geese frequented that place whilst swans floated majestically on the lakes; everywhere the sound of the beating of drums and the tinkling of ornaments resounded and, beholding Lanka that resembled Vasvakara and seemed to be built in space, the monkey was filled with rapture.

Gazing on that splendid city belonging to the Lord of the Titans, that no other surpassed in opulence, the sagacious Hanuman reflected:—'This capital, protected by Ravana's warriors is not to be subdued by force and is only accessible to Kumuda, Angada and that mighty monkey, Sushena or

Mainda and Dvivida or the offspring of Vivaswata or the monkey Kushaparva or Rikshya, that foremost of monkeys, or myself.'

Thereafter, recollecting the valour of the long-armed Raghava and the prowess of Lakshmana, the confidence of that monkey was restored.

And that mighty monkey surveyed Lanka, the capital of the Lord of the Titans, that had the sea as her raiment, cow sheds and stables for her pendants, the armouries her breasts, decked out like a woman, where darkness was dispelled by the bright light of torches and the gleaming of the stars.

And as that tiger among monkeys, son of the great Wind-god, entered the city, the Deity who presided over the capital protected by Ravana, she of monstrous aspect, rose up and barred the way of that heroic son of Vayu. Emitting a great roar, she challenged the offspring of the Wind-god, saying :—

" O Dweller of the Forest, who art thou and for what purpose hast thou come hither ? Answer truthfully if thou dost value thy life ! Under no pretext wilt thou be able to obtain entry into this Lanka protected by the forces of Ravana, which patrol it on every side."

Then the valiant Hanuman answered her, who stood before him, saying :—" I shall tell thee all about that on which thou questioneth me anon but say first who thou art in this hideous form and why thou dost admonish me in anger, O Irascible One."

Hearing Hanuman's words, the Goddess of Lanka, able to change her shape at will, waxed wrath and in harsh tones addressed the son of the Wind-god, saying :—

" Obedient to the mandate of the magnanimous Ravana, the King of the Titans, I guard the city. None may pass me, yet if any should contrive to enter here, he will soon fall under my blows, deprived of his life breaths. I am the city of Lanka itself, and whatever betide I shall remain true to the words I have uttered ! "

Hanuman, born of Maruta, the foremost of monkeys, stood motionless like a rock and beholding her in the form of a woman, that lion among monkeys, endowed with intelligence and courage, spoke to her thus :—

" I wish to behold this city with its turrets, walls and arches, and have come hither for this purpose. Great is my desire to see it and explore its woods, groves and gardens, as also its great buildings."

Hearing these words, the presiding Deity of Lanka, who was able to change her form at will, was still further provoked and answered in anger :—

" O Insensate One, O Last of the Monkeys ! without overcoming me, thou canst not behold this city to-day, which is ruled over by the King of the Titans."

Then that lion among forest dwellers replied to that female ranger of the night, saying :—" After viewing the city, O Auspicious One, I shall return from whence I came."

On this, Lanka emitted a terrible cry and struck that excellent monkey with the palm of her hand. Under the force of her blow, the valiant Son of Maruta let out a roar and closing the fingers of his left hand, pushed her away with his fist. Reflecting ' She is a woman ' he controlled his anger, nevertheless the demon fell to the ground instantly, her face distorted and, seeing her lying on the earth, Hanuman, who was full of courage and nobility, had compassion on her, she being but a woman.

Thereupon, Lanka, exceedingly agitated, addressed that monkey in low and faltering accents, saying :—

" O Mighty-armed One, have pity on me ! Spare me, O Best of Monkeys ! Those endowed with strength and prowess, stay their hand betimes ! O Thou of great might, thou hast overcome me by thy valour ! Hear the following truth from me which was proclaimed by Swyambhu who prophesied saying : ' In the hour that a monkey overcomes thee by force, the titans will cease to be invincible.'

" That time, fixed by Swyambhu has come, as is shown by thy presence here to-day ! The truth ordained by the Self-create is unalterable. The destruction of the unrighteous King Ravana together with all the titans is imminent, in consequence of the abduction of Sita. Therefore, O Best of Monkeys, do thou enter this city, which is protected by Ravana, and accomplish all thou desirest. Entering this splendid city, protected by the Lord of the Titans, which is doomed, go about freely wheresoever thou wilt, in search of the chaste daughter of Janaka."

CHAPTER 4

Hanuman observes the City and its Inhabitants

By his valour, the mighty Hanuman, foremost of monkeys, having triumphed over Lanka, that splendid city, able to change her form at will, without passing through the gate, leapt over the wall and, by night, penetrated into the centre of the capital.

Hanuman, faithful to the interests of the King of the Monkeys, having found his way into that city, thus placed his left foot on the heads of his foes;[1] and that excellent son of Maruta, entering by night, proceeded along the royal highway strewn with flowers and continued to advance through that enchanting capital where the sound of musical instruments blended with laughter.

That magnificent city with its innumerable dwellings bearing the mark of the mace and the goad, with windows of diamond, resembled the sky adorned with clouds. Lanka belonging to the titans, with its opulent mansions like white clouds, adorned with lotuses and swastikas, hung with garlands, highly decorated, was viewed by Hanuman with delight, who ranged it on Rama's behalf and in the interests of Sugriva.

That illustrious monkey passing from house to house, observed the many dwellings of varying forms, on every side and listened to the melodious chanting in triple modulation, of women sick with love, who resembled celestial nymphs. He heard the tinkling of their girdles and the clashing of their anklets, as they ascended the stairways of those dwellings belonging to the great Ones, and here and there the sound of clapping of hands and the clicking of castanets. He heard also the intoning of sacred formulas in the dwellings of the titans and the recitation of those occupied in the study of the Veda.

He also saw titans who were singing the praises of Ravana in a loud voice, a great company of them being stationed on the royal highway which they obstructed; and he observed a large

[1] Placed his left foot . . . implying that he thereby initiated the defeat of the titans.

concourse of spies in the central courtyard, who had been initiated, some with matted locks, some shaven, some wearing deerskins and some stark naked, bearing handfuls of darbha grass, braziers, picks, clubs and staves, and others in rags, who had only a single eye or ear or breast which twitched; and some were dwarfs, hideous to behold; and there were bowmen, swordsmen and warriors bearing clubs and iron bars or effulgent in curious armour; some were neither exceedingly fat nor too lean nor unduly tall nor short nor extremely fair nor dark nor humpbacked nor dwarfed; some were deformed, some handsome, some distinguished and there were also standard bearers and some who carried flags and every kind of weapon.

And Hanuman observed that some were armed with spears, darts, harpoons, arrows, slings and other weapons and many ranging about at will wore garlands and were daubed with paste, sprinkled with perfume, clothed in rich stuffs and adorned with magnificent jewels; some of these mighty warriors were furnished with javelins and maces and hundreds and thousands of them were garrisoned in the central courtyard, engaged in guarding the private apartments with vigilance by order of their king.

And he saw the famous palace of the Lord of the Titans, built on the summit of the mountain, with golden arched gateways, surrounded by a moat, embellished with pale lotuses and completely encircled by a rampart, resembling heaven itself; and it was marvellous, resonant with pleasant sounds and filled with the neighing of superb steeds and well-bred beasts and the noise of chariots and elephants; and there were four tusked elephants resembling great clouds and many herds of deer.

Then the monkey entered that palace protected by the Titan King, guarded by thousands of mighty Yatudhanas, the portals of which were richly decorated with beasts and birds and he penetrated to the inner apartment encircled with walls of Hema and Jambunada gold, its ceilings adorned with pearls and gems of great price and pervaded by the fragrance of aloe and sandalwood.

CHAPTER 5

Hanuman ranges the City without finding Sita

THEN the fortunate Hanuman beheld that brilliant orb of the night in the midst of the stars covering all beings with its light, like a bull inflamed with desire in the midst of a herd of cows, and that heroic monkey gazed on that moon, floating in the sky, white as the sheen of a conch or a lotus stalk, that star of cooling rays which destroys the sorrows of the world, draws up the tides and sheds its light on all beings. That brightness which shines on the summit of Mount Mandara and at dusk sparkles on the sea, as well as on the lotuses of the lakes, now blazed from the face of that nocturnal planet.

Like a swan on its silvery nest or a lion in a cave of the Mandara Mountain or a warrior on a proud elephant so was the splendour of the moon in the heavens. Like a humpbacked buffalo with pointed horns or the lofty Mountain Shveta with its high peaks or an elephant with gold-encircled tusks, so did the moon appear with its clearly defined prominence.

Just as the great orb of the sun dissolves the ice and frost on muddy pools so was darkness dispelled by the brilliance of the auspicious moon, whose symbol is the hare, so that even the dark patches on its surface appeared bright. Like the King of Beasts issuing from his cave or the lord of elephants entering the deep woods or a sovereign of men ranging his dominions so did the moon appear in its full splendour.

The brightness of its rising had dispelled the night, accentuating the swarthiness of the titans, those eaters of flesh, and awakening thoughts of love in the lover.

Women, whose melodious voices had charmed the ear, having disported themselves, now slept in the arms of their lords, whilst titans of strange and terrible deeds went forth marauding.

And the sagacious Hanuman beheld mansions where intoxication and folly reigned, where chariots, horses and golden seats were seen everywhere in luxurious and warlike abundance.

He beheld titans in violent debate, raising their great arms, discoursing wildly, railing at each other and exchanging

acrimonious words; and some were striking their breasts and brandishing great bows, whilst others adjusted their attire or embraced their consorts.

And Hanuman observed courtesans performing their toilet, whilst others slept and incomparably lovely women laughing or frowning in anger. Here gigantic elephants trumpeted, there worship was being performed, whilst warriors were uttering threats, so that the city resembled a lake filled with angry serpents.

And he beheld in that place, persons full of intelligence, able debators, pious men, leaders of fashion and observers of ritual, and beholding those magnificent beings, endowed with every attribute in accord with their nature, Hanuman was delighted; such was their splendour, that even those who were ugly, appeared fair.

And he saw their consorts, full of nobility and of great beauty, worthy of adornment, like unto stars in the excellence of their conduct, who were filled with affection for their protectors, some casting tender glances, others exchanging tokens and some drinking.

And by night, Hanuman observed lovely women being embraced by their paramours, affecting modesty or passion, like birds sporting with their mates, whilst others, in their homes, lay peacefully on the breasts of their lords, full of tenderness, and faithful to their conjugal duty.

Some, lying without raiment, deserted by their lovers, had the radiance of gold and were marvellously beautiful with their golden skins, graceful limbs and complexions like the moonlight.

And Hanuman saw other women in their homes experiencing the height of joy with their lords, full of delight, decked with flowers, charming the hearts of their consorts with their beauty. These lovely women of radiant countenance, resembling the moon, possessing marvellous eyes with sweeping lashes and slanting lids and adorned with innumerable jewels, seemed to Hanuman to resemble flashes of lightning.

But of the nobly-born Sita, offspring of a royal House, fixed in the path of virtue, resembling a delicate flowering creeper or the frail Sadhujata plant, sprung from the mind of Brahma Himself, he could find no trace. Sita, established in the path

of chastity, her gaze ever fixed on Rama, ever absorbed in his contemplation, his very mind and heart itself, exalted above all women, a prey to burning grief, her bosom wet with tears, she who was formerly adorned with priceless ornaments, Sita with her charming lashes and enchanting throat, resembling a blue-necked peahen disporting itself in the woods, or the blurred outline of the moon or a golden ingot covered with dust or a scar left by a wound or a golden arrow snapped by the wind.

And that monkey, after his long search, not finding Sita, consort of that lord of men, Rama, the foremost of those skilled in speech, was overcome with grief and bereft of all courage.

CHAPTER 6

Hanuman explores Ravana's Palace

WANDERING here and there at will on the roofs of the houses, that monkey, able to assume any form he chose, ranged the city of Lanka, and that auspicious one came to the abode of that Lord of the Titans, encircled by a shining wall, sparkling like the sun and guarded by terrible demons, as is a mighty forest by lions.

And that foremost of monkeys beheld that marvellous palace with its fretted archways, inlaid with silver and embellished with gold, abounding in splendid courts and gateways, filled with the drivers of elephants and indomitable warriors, irresistibly swift horses harnessed to chariots and curious waggons, covered with lion and tiger skins, that were embossed with images of gold and silver and hung with jingling bells.

Strewn with precious stones and furnished with rich seats, this was the favourite haunt of the Maharathas and their meeting place. Rare deer and birds of every species and variety abounded here, whilst disciplined sentries protected it. Everywhere noble and distinguished women could be seen and the palace was filled with the tinkling of their ornaments ; there the foremost of the titans dwelt and it was decorated with royal symbols and fragrant with sandalwood. Crowded with great beings, like a forest filled with lions, resounding to the beating of gongs,

tambourines and the blare of conches, it was also the place of worship of the titans, where offerings were made at the times of the moon's change; sometimes, in fear of Ravana, silent as the sea and sometimes resounding like the waves, that vast abode belonging to the mighty Ravana was strewn with precious gems, and that great monkey beheld it blazing in splendour and filled with elephants, horses and chariots.

'It is the jewel of Lanka' reflected that illustrious monkey, Hanuman, wandering about the outskirts of the palace and he began to range the dwellings of the titans and their gardens, and he bounded into the abode of Prahasta and then plunged courageously into the palace of Mahaparshwa; thereafter, that mighty monkey entered the residence of Kumbhakarna which resembled a mass of clouds and also that of Bibishana; then in turn he visited the dwellings of Mahodara, Virupaksha, Vidyujjibha and Vidyunmala and with a bound he entered the house of Vahudanshtra and that of Suka and the intelligent Sarana. Then the mansions of Indrajit, Jambumala and Sumala were explored by that foremost of monkeys and thereafter he passed on to the abodes of Rashmiketu, Suryasachu and Vajrakaya; and next the offspring of the Wind-god searched the habitations of Dhumraksha, Sampati, the grim Vidyudruna, Phana, Vighana and Sukanabha, Shakra, Shatha, Kapatha, Hrasvakarna, Danshtra and the demon Lomasa, Yudhyonmatta, Matta and the horseman, Dhwajagriva, Sadin, Vidyujjibha and Vijibha, as also that of Hastimukha and of Karala, Vishala and Sonitaksha. The illustrious Son of Maruta then searched the dwellings of other prosperous titans one after the other, marking their affluence.

And having searched all the residences belonging to those titans in every way, that fortunate monkey approached the palace of the king. Then the foremost of monkeys observed demon women of menacing looks, prowling outside the apartments where Ravana slept, bearing darts and maces in their hands and equipped with spears and clubs and he beheld innumerable bands of them in the abode of the titan king and gigantic demons brandishing weapons of every kind. He beheld steeds of exceeding swiftness, red, white and black and wonderfully bred elephants, vanquishers of hostile tuskers, trained for every

suitable purpose and equal to Airavata himself in conflict and these elephants, the destroyers of hostile armies resembled scurrying clouds or moving hills and their trumpeting was like the crash of thunder.

Then that monkey, the son of the Wind-god, beheld thousands of the titan host in that palace and cars of gold and glittering mail which shone like the rising sun ; he saw also many litters of different shapes, and bowers, picture galleries, gymnasiums, mountains constructed of wood, pavilions and entertainment halls. And in that palace belonging to Ravana, was a charming edifice as beautiful as the Mandara Mountain and pens for peacocks and banners and flagpoles. Heaps of jewels lay about and a great accumulation of treasure had been brought there by the exploits of those valiant titans so that it resembled the palace of Kuvera. On account of the lustre of those gems and the resplendence of Ravana himself, that palace glittered like the sun with its myriad rays.

And that monkey chief beheld couches and seats of gold, and vessels wrought with pearls overflowing with wines,[1] and the dimensions and magnificence of that place caused it to resemble the mansion of Kama or the abode of Kuvera, and that palace resounded with the tinkling of anklets and girdles, with drums and cymbals and other musical instruments and was thronged with women as lovely as pearls and surrounded by great ramparts.

CHAPTER 7

Description of the Aerial Chariot Pushpaka

THEN that mighty monkey continued to explore those dwellings fitted with golden windows, studded with emeralds, resembling a mass of clouds in the rainy season rent by lightning and traversed by flocks of cranes. And he beheld various halls and

[1] Overflowing with Wines—Lit. : Madha and Asava—spiritous liquors made of honey, molasses or the blossom of Bassia Caryola, or according to some, grapes.

buildings stored with conches, bows and weapons of war, furnished with turrets as high as hills, and these mansions, containing treasure of every kind were held in regard by both Gods and titans and were flawless and constructed by Ravana by his own power.

Hanuman having scoured the mansions of that Lord of Lanka meticulously furnished with every comfort as if Maya had created them, thereafter visited the palace of that King of Rakshasas himself, which surpassed all others and resembled a mass of towering clouds. Of incomparable loveliness, it seemed as if heaven itself had descended on earth and its beauty was dazzling. Teeming with innumerable gems, trees of every kind covered it with flowers like the summit of a mountain on which snow has fallen; beautiful women served as its ornaments and it shone like a cloud riven by lightning ; such was its splendour that it resembled a marvellous chariot drawn through the skies by ravishing swans.

Like the peak of a mountain rich in ore or the firmament adorned by the moon and stars or like clouds of many hues, it glistened with innumerable gems. Artificial rocks made of clay, resembling mountain ranges, planted with counterfeit trees laden with heaps of flowers, fashioned with stamens and leaves could be seen there and improvised dwellings, dazzlingly white, with pools covered with flowering lotuses possessing golden stamens, and diverse groves and ravishing fountains.

The monkey gazed on the vast aerial chariot named Pushpaka, which, gleaming like pearl, planed above the highest buildings and contained birds made of emerald, silver and coral and serpents marvellously fashioned of various metals and life-sized horses and birds with charming beaks and wonderful wings which contracted and expanded, their plumage like that of Kama himself, posed on gold and coral flowers ; and there were elephants with tapering trunks, bearing lotus leaves, engaged in showering water on the Goddess Lakshmi, who, seated in a pool, held lotuses in her fair hands.

Such was the marvellous creation which met the astonished monkey's gaze, which resembled a mountain of charming caverns or a tree from whose hollows delicious fragrance escapes in the springtime.

Yet that monkey searching that exalted city, protected by the ten-headed Ravana, was unable to find the daughter of Janaka, so highly regarded and deeply afflicted and who had been conquered by the virtue and valour of her lord. And not finding Janaka's daughter, despite his investigations and the vigilance of his search, the illustrious Hanuman, who was virtuous and generous of soul, felt a burning anguish take possession of his heart.

CHAPTER 8

A further Description of the Aerial Chariot Pushpaka

HALTING there, the intelligent monkey, born of Pavana, regarded that splendid chariot encrusted with gold and gems more carefully. Fashioned of plated gold, embellished with lovely images, regarded by Vishwakarma himself as an incomparable artistic achievement, travelling in space like a guiding light in the orbit of the sun, it was immeasurably resplendent. No detail of that car had been executed unskilfully, no ornament but appeared to be a jewel of great price nor was there anything surpassed by the chariots of the Gods, every part being excellently wrought.

By the merit of his asceticism and contemplation Ravana had obtained it and it repaired wheresoever its master directed it by the power of his thought. Irresistible and swift as the wind, a source of happiness to those magnanimous beings given to pious deeds, who had reached the peak of prosperity and glory, capable of ranging the firmament, containing many apartments and furnished with innumerable works of art, captivating to the mind, stainless as the autumnal moon, resembling a mountain with splendid peaks, borne by thousands of demons whose cheeks were graced with earrings, voracious eaters, of large unwinking eyes, who travelled through space with exceeding velocity day and night, that aerial chariot, Pushpaka, splendid to look upon, covered with flowers, fairer than spring itself, drew the gaze of that Prince of Monkey Warriors.

CHAPTER 9

Hanuman searches the Harem

WITHIN these precincts, a magnificent building, remarkable for its spaciousness and splendour, arrested the attention of Hanuman, the son of Maruta; it was two miles in width, four in length and belonged to the King of the Titans himself.

And Hanuman, the slayer of his foes, ranging here and there in search of the Princess of Videha, the large-eyed Sita, beheld that goodly residence where the titans dwelt together and he approached the palace of the king, surrounded by three and four tusked elephants and guarded in its entire length by warriors bearing weapons in their hands. He beheld that dwelling, thronged with titan women, consorts of Ravana, and also the daughters of kings who had been forcibly carried away by him, which resembled an ocean teeming with crocodiles, sharks, whales, enormous fish and serpents, agitated by the force of the tempest. And the splendour of the abode of Vaishravana, Chandra and Harivahana was reflected in Ravana's palace, a splendour that was unequalled and changeless and the prosperity of the residences of Kuvera, Yama and Varuna were rivalled, nay surpassed, by that of the titan's abode.

In the centre of that palace, the offspring of the wind, saw yet another edifice, well constructed and furnished with innumerable grilles. Formerly created in heaven at Brahma's wish by Vishwakarma, that noble car embellished with gems was called Pushpaka, which Kuvera had acquired by prolonged austerities and of which the King of the Titans, having vanquished him by his might, took possession. And that mighty monkey ascended that splendid car, containing figures of wolves made of Kartasvara and Hiranya gold and adorned with slender pillars of dazzling splendour, furnished with private rooms and gleaming pavilions, resembling the Meru and Mandara Mountains, licking the skies and blazing like the sun.

This masterpiece of Vishwakarma had many golden stairways and a superb and marvellous ceiling; it contained balconies and galleries of deep blue sapphire and other precious gems; the floors were encrusted with rare pearls which rendered it blindingly beautiful; built of red sandalwood and shining like pure gold, it resembled the rising sun and subtle perfumes rose therefrom.

That mighty monkey, stationed there, smelt the rich odour of wines and viands which rose on every side, and those ambrosial and penetrating fumes seemed to him to be the embodiment of Anila herself and were inhaled by him as coming from an intimate friend, and that aroma seemed to say to Hanuman " Come hither where Ravana is to be found ", and he proceeded further and beheld a vast and glorious hall.

Now that spacious apartment was very dear to Ravana, who looked on it as a greatly cherished woman and its jewelled stairways and galleries of pure gold gave it a dazzling appearance, the floors being of crystal with inlay of ivory, pearl, diamond, coral, silver and gold. It was adorned with many jewelled pilasters, which were symetrical, straight, elegant and inlaid with exceeding artistry and it was supported by tall pillars of equal size resembling wings so that the building seemed to be flying in the air and the floor was covered by a carpet, wide and four-cornered like the earth[1] and patterned as with varied countries, kingdoms and dwellings, and there the song of birds could be heard and it was pervaded by a celestial fragrance.

Hung with rich tapestries, darkened by incense fumes, spotless and pure as a swan, garlanded with leaves and flowers lending it the resemblance of Kamadhenu, bringing delight to the heart, colour to the cheek, giving birth to prosperity and banishing all sorrow, the apartments of the King of the Titans gratified every sense, as if it were a mother.

Entering that abode protected by Ravana, Hanuman asked himself: " Can this be paradise or the region of the Gods or Indra's capital or the state of supreme bliss? " and he examined the golden lamps, which resembled gamblers

[1] Four-Cornered—The ancient Hindu belief was that the earth was four-cornered.

absorbed in their dice, who, defeated by their opponents, are plunged in thought, and Hanuman perceived that the brilliance of the lamps and the lustre of Ravana and the splendour of the decorations, illumined the appartment.

He beheld innumerable women, lying on the rugs, attired in every kind of raiment with wreaths on their heads, who, under the influence of wine, had fallen asleep, having ceased to disport themselves, half the night being spent. And, on account of the silence, that great company, decked with ornaments, the tinkling of which was no longer audible, resembled a vast lake filled with lotuses where the sound of the swans and the humming of bees has ceased.

Maruti gazed on the faces of those lovely women with eyes and mouths shut fast, emitting a flower-like fragrance and they resembled lotuses that, folding their petals at evening, wait for the dawn to open them once more or like water lilies which the bees, intoxicated with love, visit continually. With just cause did that noble and mighty monkey compare them to nymphoeae, for the harem was bright with their radiance, as the starry heavens on a serene autumnal night and, in their midst, the King of the Titans blazed like a fair moon, encircled by attendant stars.

Then that monkey said to himself: "Those planets that have fallen from the firmament, their merit exhausted, are all re-united here", and in sooth, those women in their grace, beauty and magnificence shone like dazzling meteors.

Some lay wrapped in slumber into which they had fallen in the midst of dancing and feasting, their hair and crowns in disarray, their ornaments scattered here and there; others amongst those lovely beings had lost their anklets and the tilaka mark on their foreheads had been effaced; some had allowed their garlands to fall aside, some had broken their pearls and, their raiment in disorder, their girdles loosened, resembled disburdened mules, whilst others, bereft of earrings, their garlands torn and crushed, looked like flowering creepers trodden under foot by great elephants in the forest.

Sometimes the loosened pearls, like the scintillating rays of the moon, lay between the women's breasts like sleeping swans, whilst chains of emerald resembled drakes or those of gold

looked like Chakravata birds. And those women were like unto rivers, their thighs being the banks, where swans, geese and other waterfowl disport themselves or, sleeping, resembled streams, the golden bells on their girdles, the ripples, their faces, the lotuses, their amorous desires, the crocodiles, their grace, the banks.

On their tender limbs the marks of the ornaments looked like bees, whilst the veils of others, rising and falling with their breath, fluttered gracefully before their faces like bright streamers of many-coloured yarn and the earrings of others vibrated gently with the circulating air.

Their subtly perfumed breath impregnated with the aroma of sugar-sweetened wines which they had drunk, caused Ravana delight and, some of his consorts, in dream, savoured the lips of their rivals again and again, deeming them to be the king's. Passionately devoted to their lord, these lovely women, no longer mistresses of themselves, offered their companions marks of their affection. Some, in their rich attire, slept leaning on their arms laden with bracelets, some rested on their companions' breasts, some on their laps, their bosoms, their thighs and backs, and under the influence of wine, clinging amorously to one another, those women of slender waist, slept, their arms intertwined.

Those groups of damsels enfolding one another, resembled a garland of flowers visited by amorous bees or, like creepers opening to the caress of the vernal breeze that intertwine, forming clusters of blossom or the interlocking branches of great forest trees full of swarming bees; thus seemed this gathering of Ravana's consorts. And on account of the proximity of these women, sleeping close to one another, it was impossible to distinguish to whom the jewels, veils and garlands covering their limbs, belonged.

While Ravana slept, the beauty of those women resembling golden lamps, seemed to watch over him and there were daughters of Rajarishis, Giants and Celestial Beings, who had become his consorts and that war-like titan king had acquired them after subduing their relatives, though some had followed him of their own accord from love. None had been forcibly borne away who had not been attracted by his prowess and

qualities and none had belonged to another, save the daughter of Janaka whose heart was set on Rama; none was devoid of nobility, beauty, intelligence and grace and each was the object of Ravana's desire.

Then the lord of the monkeys, endowed with virtue, reflected: "If the consort of Raghava were as one of these women, the King of the Titans would indeed be blessed to-day, but Sita is far superior to them on account of her great qualities, which is evident, since for her sake that mighty monarch of Lanka has committed this wicked deed.

CHAPTER 10

Hanuman sees Ravana surrounded by his Wives

LOOKING round, Hanuman observed a splendid dais, worthy of the Gods, made of crystal encrusted with pearls, furnished with couches of emerald mounted on ivory and gold and covered with rich and priceless rugs. And he saw a white canopy, in that place, festooned with celestial garlands that gleamed like the moon.

And he observed a magnificent couch inlaid with gold, flaming like fire and bearing garlands of Ashoka flowers, around which figures were waving fans to and fro, creating cooling draughts and perfumes of every kind wreathed it with delicious fragrance. Spread with soft woollen cloths and decked with chaplets of flowers, it was adorned on every side.

And there, resembling a thundercloud, the Sovereign of the Titans lay with bright and flashing earrings, reddened eyes, golden raiment, his limbs smeared with saffron and fragrant sandal, like a purple cloud at dusk, riven with lightning. Adorned with celestial ornaments, magnificent to behold, able to change his form at will, as he lay asleep he resembled the Mandara Mountain with its trees, groves and bushes without number. Having ceased from dalliance, decked with priceless ornaments, the delight of the titans and dear to all the titan women, his feasting over he lay sleeping on the golden bed, breathing like a serpent.

And Hanuman, filled with awe, shrank back in fear, and stationed himself on a landing of the stairway, pressing himself against the inner wall; then that courageous monkey looked down on that lion among titans lying there in a drunken stupor. And as the King of the Titans lay sleeping, his luxurious couch resembled a great waterfall by which a mighty tusker in mustha is resting.

Hanuman looked down on the two outstretched arms, encircled with golden bracelets of that gigantic monarch, resembling the standards of Indra, which had formerly been pierced in combat by the sharp tusks of Airavata and torn by the discus of Vishnu and the great shoulders that had been lacerated by Indra's mace. Those vast arms, firmly set with well-formed, powerful muscles and thumbs and nails bearing auspicious marks, rings coverings the fingers, those arms, thick as clubs, rounded like the trunk of an elephant, that lay along the opulent couch as it were two snakes with five heads, smeared with sandal of the colour of hare's blood, fresh, extremely rare and of a delicious fragrance massaged by women of sovereign beauty with precious unguents, those arms that had caused Yakshas, Pannagas, Gandharvas Devas and Danavas to cry out in terror, that monkey gazed upon as they lay along the couch, like two great and angry reptiles sleeping in a cave on the Mandara Mountain. And with his two great arms, the Chief of the Titans resembled Mount Mandara with its twin peaks.

The scent of the Mango or Punnaga tree, impregnated with that of the Bakula blended with the savour of viands and the aroma of wine, issued from the vast mouth of that Monarch of Titans during sleep and seemed to fill the whole apartment. His diadem was decorated with rubies and precious stones, gleaming with gold and he was adorned with earrings, smeared with red sandal, his well-developed chest bearing a string of pearls; a white silken cloth, flung aside, revealed his scars and he was covered with a costly yellow coverlet. Like a mass of light he lay, hissing like a serpent so that it seemed as if an elephant lay asleep in the deep waters of the Ganges. Four lamps, set on golden pillars, cast their light to the four sides as lightning reveals the surface of a mass of cloud.

Then that foremost of monkeys saw the wives of that great monarch of the titans sleeping at the foot of their lord, their faces bright as the moon, wearing precious earrings and fresh garlands. Skilled musicians and dancers, they lay in the arms and on the breast of that Indra of Titans, attired in beautiful raiment, and the monkey gazed on those women wearing golden bracelets and earrings set with diamonds and emeralds, their faces fair as the moon, illumined by the reflection of their glittering earrings, lighting the hall as stars illumine the firmament.

Overcome with drinking and amorous dalliance, those slender-waisted wives of the King of the Demons lay fast asleep where they had been seated; and one, possessed of lovely limbs, skilled in the dance, slept there, wearied by her graceful motions, whilst another, embracing her Vina, looked like a lotus that had fallen into the water clinging to a passing raft; a third dark-eyed maiden held her Mankuka in her lap, as a youthful woman would her child, while yet another with graceful limbs and shapely bosom, slept with her tambourine pressed to her heart, as one embraces his love after a long absence. This one, with eyes like lotuses had fallen asleep clasping her Vina, as a beautiful girl enfolds her beloved one affectionately in her arms. Here one of restrained sense lay beside her lute which she encircled with her arms, resembling one affianced lying by the side of her chosen one; there, one whose limbs gleamed like Kanada gold, dimpled, ravishing, her eyes heavy with wine, though sleeping, was striking her drum. One of slender waist and flawless beauty, worn out by feasting, slept with a cymbal in her lap and yet another held a Dindima and had another slung on her back so that she looked like a young mother with her husband and her child. One, with eyes large as lotus petals, clasping her Adambara tightly to her breast, had fallen asleep under the influence of wine and yet another, her water vessel overturned, resembled a flowery wreath that is sprinkled with water to keep it green; another, falling under the sway of sleep, with her hands covered her breasts resembling two golden cups, and one, with eyes like lotuses, fair as the moon, had fallen asleep embracing one of her companions possessed of lovely hips. Peerlessly beautiful women, clasping musical

instruments, pressed them to their bosoms like lovers their chosen ones.

And that monkey beheld a marvellous bed set apart, on which one of these lovely women lay, richly attired, adorned with pearls and precious gems, who seemed to lend radiance to that magnificent apartment. Clad in silk bright as Kanaka gold, Ravana's favourite Queen, Mandodari by name, that slender-waisted woman of gracious features, lay fast asleep, adorned with ornaments and, seeing her, that offspring of the Wind-God said to himself: " This one, endowed with the wealth of youth and beauty may be Sita " and he rejoiced exceedingly. Thereafter, in his delight, he leapt into the air, waving his tail and manifesting his joy by his antics, frolicking, singing, climbing up the pillars from whence he dropped to the ground, thus demonstrating his monkey nature.

CHAPTER II

Description of the Banqueting Hall

THEN that mighty monkey dismissed this thought concerning Sita and began to reflect further:

" Separated from Rama, that lovely woman would be unable to sleep, eat or adorn herself nor would she submit to any other, were he King of the Celestials himself, for Rama has no equal even among the Gods; this is therefore some other."

In this conviction, that foremost of monkeys began to search the banqueting hall anew, anxious to discover Sita.

Leaning on their tambourines, drums and Celikas, or stretched on luxurious couches, all these women slept soundly, worn out with playing, singing, dancing and drinking. And that leader of monkeys saw thousands of women beautifully adorned, some having fallen asleep discussing each other's charms, some debating the art of singing, some skilled in discerning time and place, discoursing on circumstance, some given over to merriment and, elsewhere also, he observed beautiful and youthful women who had fallen asleep talking of

beauty, or, full of perspicacity, deciding what was opportune. And in their midst, the Lord of the Titans, resembled a bull in a spacious stall, surrounded by graceful kine. Encircled by those women, that King of the Titans looked like a mighty tusker accompanied by female elephants in the forest.

In the abode of that powerful Titan King, that lion among monkeys searched the banqueting hall throughout, furnished with every desirable object and he beheld the flesh of buffalo, deer and bear in separate dishes together with peacock and fowl on golden platters, that had not been broached, and percupine, deer and peacocks, seasoned with curds and sochal salt and goats, leverets and fish half consumed, with portions of dressed venison and sauces. There were wines of superior vintage and rare dishes with salted pies spiced with vinegar and diverse confections capable of stimulating the appetite. Costly bracelets and anklets were scattered here and there and fruit was arranged in small dishes, whilst flowers were spread about, lending the whole floor an air of splendour, and elegant couches and seats set round that place of feasting caused it to shine like fire. In addition, meats of every kind and flavour, seasoned with diverse substances and dressed by skilful cooks, were placed round the hall and Hanuman observed delicious beverages made of a variety of ingredients, some from sugar, some distilled from fruit and flowers or impregnated with fragrant powders.

The vast floor reflected the innumerable garlands, golden vessels, crystal bowls and cups lying everywhere and looked exceedingly beautiful and that mighty monkey saw golden wine jars studded with gems, some of which were full of wine, some half full and some wholly drained; and there were many wines that had not yet been served and various kinds of viands that remained untouched.

Elsewhere he saw many couches that were unoccupied, and some, where women of unsurpassed beauty slept, clasping each other in their arms. One of these youthful women had forcibly possessed herself of another's quilt and, wrapping herself therein, had fallen asleep. The gentle breathing of these women barely stirred their attire or the garlands that adorned them but caressed them as it were and a gentle breeze, laden

with the odour of sandal and the sweet-tasting Sidhu, with the diverse floral wreaths and flowers, perfumed bark prepared for ablutions and incense, spread over the aerial car, Pushpaka.

And in that residence of the titan there were women of incomparable beauty, some dark-skinned, some the colour of Kancana gold, who, overcome by slumber and worn out with dalliance, resembled sleeping lotuses.

Thus that mighty monkey searched every quarter of Ravana's private apartments without seeing Janaki anywhere and, having scanned the faces of all these women, he was filled with apprehension, fearing lest he had failed in his purpose. Then he reflected: " Beholding the wife of another while she is sleeping, is undoubtedly an infringement of the moral law, verily to look on another's wife was never my intention but here I have seen one who hath lusted after the wives of others."

Then another thought came to that sagacious monkey, single-mindedly bent on the execution of his duty: "All these consorts of Ravana have been beheld by me without their knowledge yet I find no fluctuation in the tenor of my mind. The mind is the motive power of every movement of the senses, whether it be good or evil and mine remains untroubled; further, how could I search for Sita otherwise? It is amongst women that one should look for women; every being is to be sought amongst its own kind, none searches for a woman among deer. Therefore with a pure heart I have explored Ravana's inner apartment but I have not seen the daughter of Janaka."

And Hanuman scrutinized the faces of the daughters of Devas, Danavas and Nagas, without finding Sita and, not finding her in that place, he left the banqueting hall and began to search elsewhere. Leaving that place of feasting, the offspring of the Wind-god began to look for Sita in another quarter.

CHAPTER 12

Hanuman becomes despondent

REMAINING in the precincts of the palace, Hanuman searched the arbours, galleries and the sleeping apartments, eager to discover Sita but without being able to find that lady of gracious appearance there ; and, not finding the beloved of that descendant of Raghu, the mighty monkey reflected :—

" Since, despite mine exertions I am unable to find the daughter of Mithila, assuredly Sita is no longer alive. That youthful and virtuous woman, anxious to defend her honour, has been slain by the wicked Lord of the Titans for remaining faithful to her conjugal duty or the daughter of King Janaka has died of fright on seeing those consorts of the Sovereign of the Titans, who are deformed, sallow-skinned, misshapen and who possess huge heads and monstrous forms. Failing to discover Sita, my valour has been expended in vain and a large part of the term allotted to the monkeys has run out; I dare not present myself before Sugriva, who is powerful and given to meting out harsh punishment. I have explored the inner apartments thoroughly but the gentle Sita was not to be found there and I have spent myself in vain. Further, on my return, the assembled monkeys will enquire of me saying : " O Valiant Hanuman, having reached the further shore, what didst thou accomplish there, tell us ? "

Not having seen Janaka's daughter, what shall I answer ? The term fixed having passed, assuredly it is meet that I should fast to death, and what will the aged Jambavan and Angada say with all the assembled monkeys since I have crossed the ocean to no purpose ? Yet perseverance is the root of success, perseverance is the root of prosperity, perseverance brings supreme felicity, therefore I will search all those places still left unexplored by me. Moreover it is my intention to put forth fresh efforts and investigate all those regions not yet visited by me and the banqueting halls, the gardens, the sports pavilions, the courtyards, dwellings, highways, alleys and

chariots, though already searched by me, shall be examined once again.

Having thus resolved, Hanuman set about exploring the basements, temples and many-storied dwellings, going up and down, to and fro, opening doors and closing others, entering here and making an exit there, till there was not even the space of four fingers left unscrutinized by him. And he visited the galleries running inside the ramparts and terraces supported by stanchions and the groves and lotus pools and he saw there hideous and monstrous female titans of every shape but not the daughter of Janaka; and the illustrious consorts of Vidyadharas fell under his gaze but not the beloved of Raghava.

Hanuman beheld there also the daughters of Nagas, of lovely limbs, whose faces shone like the full moon, who had been forcibly brought there by the Lord of the Titans, but not the cherished daughter of Janaka and, not seeing her among all those lovely women, a profound despair seized that warrior born of Maruta.

Reflecting that the exertions of all those leaders of monkeys and the crossing of the ocean had proved vain, the son of Anila became extremely anxious and descended from that aerial car. Thereafter Hanuman, born of Maruta, grew pensive and a great melancholy invaded his soul.

CHAPTER 13

Hanuman's Dilemma

DESCENDING on to the ramparts from the aerial car, that leader of monkeys, the agile Hanuman, resembled a flash of lightning athwart the clouds and, having searched the apartments of Ravana without finding Sita, Videha's daughter, he said to himself:—

" Seeking the object of Rama's affection, I have explored Lanka again and again without finding the daughter of Janaka of immaculate form! Many times have the marshes, pools,

lakes, streams, rivers, banks, forests and inaccessible mountains been scoured by me without any trace of Sita being found!

"The King of the Vultures, Sampati, affirmed that Sita was in Ravana's palace but I do not see her there, how can this be? Or has the daughter of Videha, Maithili, born of Janaka, who was carried away against her will, being wholly helpless surrendered to Ravana? Or perchance, fearing Rama's arrows, in his rapid flight, that titan has allowed Sita to slip from his grasp or she seeing herself borne away on the path of the Siddhas and beholding the ocean, has yielded up her life? Who can say whether that noble large-eyed lady has not succumbed on account of the great speed assumed by Ravana and the pressure of his arms?

"It may happen that, while Ravana flew over the sea, the daughter of Janaka struggling to free herself, fell into the waves, or alas, far from her lord, seeking to defend her honour, was devoured by that vile Ravana. May not that innocent dark-eyed lady have become the food of those impure consorts of that Indra of demons? Ever absorbed in the contemplation of Rama, whose countenance resembles the moon, has she breathed her last, bewailing her lot and crying: 'O Rama! O Lakshmana! O Ayodhya!', or, having been banished to the dungeons of Ravana's palace, is that youthful woman grieving like a caged bird? How could the slender-waisted consort of Rama, born of the blood of Janaka, possessing eyes like lotus petals, submit to Ravana? But whether she be slain or is lost or has died, I dare not speak of it to Rama. To tell him would be an offence, yet it is also wrong to withhold it from him; what should I do? I am perplexed! In such a dilemna, how shall I act?"

Thus thinking, Hanuman added:—"If, without finding Sita, I return to the city of that lord among monkeys, in how far will my courage have availed me? My crossing of the ocean has come to nought as also my entry into Lanka and my survey of the titans. When I come to Kishkindha, what will Sugriva and the assembled monkeys say to me or those twin sons of Dasaratha? If I approach Kakutstha with these fatal tidings saying: 'I have not found Sita', he will give up his life. Hearing these cruel, terrible, heartrending and barbarous

words, he will not survive and, when his mind has been withdrawn into the five elements, the sagacious Lakshmana, deeply attached to Rama, will also cease to exist! Then, hearing that his two brothers are dead, Bharata will yield up his life and Shatrughna will renounce his existence also. Beholding their sons dead, their mothers, Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi will undoubtedly surrender their lives and, seeing Rama's plight, his grateful and loyal friend, Sugriva, will give up his life. Then the grief-stricken Ruma, distracted and crushed with sorrow, will perish on account of her lord and the Queen Tara, already inconsolable on account of Bali's end, worn out by suffering will be unable to continue living. The loss of his parents will lead the youthful Angada to the brink of death and, overwhelmed by the passing of their leader, the inhabitants of the woods having been cherished with gentleness, gifts and regard by their illustrious monarch, will strike their heads with their fists and die.

"Thenceforth, those foremost of monkeys will no longer assemble to disport themselves in the woods, among the rocks and caves, but with their sons, wives and servants, in despair on account of their master's death, will hurl themselves from the height of the rocks into the abysses and chasms. And they will take poison or hang themselves or enter the fire or fast to death or fall on their own weapons. It is certain that a great calamity will follow my return and the House of Ikshwaku and the inhabitants of the forests will meet with destruction.

"But, if I do not return, those two virtuous and great car-warriors as also the swift-footed monkeys will continue to live in the hope of receiving tidings of Sita, and I, not having found Sita, shall exist by that which falls to my lot, living a life of privation and subsisting on fruit and roots in the forest.

"Preparing a funeral pyre on the shores of the sea, in a place abounding in roots, fruits and water, I shall enter the flames or allow myself to die of hunger and, without fail, offer my emaciated frame as food for the birds and beasts of prey. In my belief, this is the death the sages envisaged for themselves; either I must find Janaki or enter the sea.

"My bright garland of glory, so nobly plaited and begot of courageous acts has perished because I have not been able

to find Sita. I shall therefore become an ascetic living under the trees but return I will not without having seen that dark-eyed damsel. If I go back without finding Sita, neither Angada nor the other monkeys will survive. Yet incalculable ills lie in store for one taking his own life; if however I continue to live, I may achieve success, therefore I shall maintain my existence! If I live, the re-union of Rama and Sita may be effected."

Revolving these innumerable and painful considerations in his mind, that lion among monkeys sought to prevent himself from being overcome by despair. Summoning up all his courage, that mighty monkey said to himself:—

"I shall slay Dashagriva the terrible Ravana and thus avenge the abduction of Sita or, crossing the sea, I shall drag him before Rama as a beast is offered up to Pashupati."

Reflecting thus, that monkey, who was filled with anxiety and grief, not having been able to find Sita, thought: "So long as I do not find the illustrious consort of Rama, I shall not cease from searching the city of Lanka on every side. If, according to Sampati's words, I bring Rama hither, Raghava, not beholding his consort, will burn all the monkeys with the fire of his wrath. Therefore I shall stay here, living a life of abstinence with my senses under control lest all men and monkeys perish through my fault.

"Here is a great Ashoka grove, containing huge trees, which has not yet been searched by me. Having paid reverence to the Vasus, the Rudras, the Adityas, the Ashwins and the Maruts, in order to increase the torment of the titans, I shall enter it. Having vanquished the demons, I shall restore the divine Sita, the delight of the House of Ikshwaku to Rama as the fruit of austerity is bestowed on an ascetic."

Having thus reflected for a space, the mighty offspring of the Wind-god suddenly rose and said: "Salutations to Rama accompanied by Lakshmana and Anila! Salutations to Chandra, Agni and the Maruts!"

After paying obeisance to all the Gods as also to Sugriva, the offspring of the Wind-god, surveying the four quarters, in imagination as it were advanced towards that magnificent grove and began to consider what should be done further.

He reflected: " This Ashoka Grove which is sacred with its dense thickets must be filled with titans, its trees are surely protected by trained guards and the blessed Vishvatam himself refrains from blowing vigorously here. In Rama's interests I shall contract my form so that I may not be detected by Ravana. May all the Gods, as also the hosts of sages, confer success on me! May Swyambhu, the Celestial Beings, as also the ascetics, the God of Fire, the God of the Wind, the Bearer of the Thunderbolt, Varuna, the Moon and the Sun, the high-souled Ashwins and all the Maruts grant me success! May all beings and the Lord of all Beings and those unknown, who are met with on the way, confer success on me!

" When shall I behold that noble and irreproachable queen with her arched nose, pearly teeth, sweet smile and eyes resembling lotus petals, bright as the King of the Stars, O when ?

" O how will that frail and virtuous one, ruthlessly borne away by that wicked and vile wretch, the scourge of human beings, who masks his savagery under an alluring disguise, disclose herself to me ? "

CHAPTER 14

The Ashoka Grove

HAVING meditated for a space, Hanuman, who had rejoined Sita in thought, leapt from the rampart on to the surrounding wall and trembling with delight, that mighty monkey, standing there, beheld every variety of tree and flower, it being early spring He saw Sala, Ashoka, Bhavya, Champaka, Uddalaka, Nagavriksha, Mango and Kapimukha trees in flower with clumps of Amras intertwined with hundreds of creepers. And Hanuman, leaping down into that enchanting grove, like an arrow shot from a bow, entered that garden resembling the rising sun which re-echoed to the song of birds, planted

with gold and silver saplings and containing flocks of birds and deer with trees of varying fragrance which filled him with wonder.

Abounding in trees of every kind, laden with flowers and fruit, where cuckoos called deliriously and swarms of bees hummed, where all creatures expressed happiness in their movements, where the cries of the peacock could be heard and waterfowl teemed, the heart of the beholder was ravished.

And Hanuman, searching for that princess of beautiful and faultless limbs, woke the birds that had been sleeping sweetly and blown by the wind set up by the wings of those birds in flight, a shower of variegated blossom fell, covering Hanuman, the son of the Wind-god in the midst of the Ashoka Grove lending him the loveliness of a hill covered with flowers. Then all the creatures beholding that monkey, as they darted from all sides, thought: " It is the God of Spring ".

Wholly hidden in blossom which had fallen from the trees, the earth looked like a bride covered with jewels and, shaken in diverse ways by the motion of that impetuous monkey the trees rained down a shower of multi-coloured blooms. And those trees, whose tops were stripped of leaves, from which both blossom and fruit had fallen, looked like gamblers who have staked their raiment and possessions only to lose all. Buffetted by Hanuman's leaping, those lovely trees speedily let their flowers, leaves and fruit fall to the ground and, deserted by the birds, no longer able to seek shelter there, on account of the shaking administered by Maruti, presented their bare branches only, so that the Ashoka grove, battered by the blows of the monkey's feet and tail, resembled a youthful woman with her locks dishevelled, the brightness of her lips and teeth dimmed, her tilaka mark effaced and her arms and legs scarred. And in his haste, that monkey snapped the clusters of creepers as the wind dispels the clouds during the rainy season.

Ranging here and there, that monkey observed places that were paved with gold and silver with ponds filled with translucent water, their steps encrusted with valuable gems, pearls and coral, their floors being of crystal and the banks set with trees of Kancana gold which emitted a dazzling light.

These pools were covered with clumps of lotuses and lilies whilst waterfowl enhanced their beauty and they re-echoed to the cry of Natyuhas, swans and geese; broad and beautiful streams, bordered on every side by trees, fed them with their waters which resembled Amrita and glided under variegated shrubs decorated by hundreds of creepers, the ground being carpeted by rhododendron and oleander flowers.

Then that foremost of monkeys beheld a high hill, bright as a cloud crowned with lofty peaks, many kinds of trees and filled with caves, and it was one of the wonders of the world! And he beheld a river falling from those heights, like a youthful woman tearing herself from her lover's arms in order to leave him and the branches of the trees, sweeping the water, looked as if the companions of that damsel were detaining her, whilst further down, Hanuman beheld that stream returning on its course, as if the maiden, appeased, were reconciled to her beloved.

Thereafter at some distance from the river, a pool filled with lotuses, frequented by birds of every kind drew the gaze of that lion among monkeys, Hanuman, born of Maruta; and he saw a fountain of fresh water with enchanting steps made of precious gems, its basin strewn with pearls, which was embellished on every side with countless herds of deer, ravishing groves, and mansions built by Vishvakarma himself, adorned with artificial woods and trees laden with fruit and flowers, their branches spreading like umbrellas giving shade, whilst the ground beneath was paved with gold and silver.

And that great monkey beheld a single golden Shingshapa tree surrounded by a golden dais and he saw many flower beds and trees which resembled flames, the radiance of which rivalled Mount Meru and caused him to think they were made of gold. Seeing those beautiful golden trees, with their flowering crests, buds and shoots agitated by the wind, emitting a sound like the tinkling of many ornaments, Hanuman was astounded.

Climbing quickly into that many-leafed Shingshapa tree Hanuman reflected: "From here I may perchance behold Vaidehi, that unhappy being who sighs for Rama's presence and who, filled with grief, wanders aimlessly to and fro. Without doubt, this Ashoka Grove embellished by Candana,

Champaka and Vakula trees, belongs to the wicked Ravana. Here by this lovely pool frequented by birds, that princess and royal spouse, Sita, will certainly repair. She, the beloved of Raghava, accustomed to wander in the woods, bereft of Rama, will assuredly come hither. That lady, whose eyes resemble a doe's, tormented with grief on account of separation from Rama, fond of roving in the woods, will certainly walk in this grove. She, the chaste and virtuous wife of Rama, Janaka's daughter, who ever loved the creatures of the forest, anxious to offer up her devotion, will come to this river of translucent waters, for this purpose.

" Truly this beautiful grove is worthy to be the abode of that chaste consort of the king of men, Rama. If that goddess, whose countenance resembles the moon, still lives, she will inevitably visit this river of cool waters."

Thus reflected the high-souled Hanuman, expecting the consort of that lord of men to appear and, concealing himself in the Shingshapa tree covered with leaves and flowers, gazed out over the whole scene.

CHAPTER 15

Hanuman sees Sita

SEATED in the tree, glancing round in quest of Sita, Hanuman surveyed the entire grove filled with trees intertwined with creepers and redolent with celestial odours. Manifesting every aspect of beauty, possessing the splendour of the Nandana Gardens, it was inhabited by various animals and birds, embellished by palaces and temples and re-echoed to the call of the cuckoo. Adorned with pools filled with golden lotuses and silvery waterlilies, furnished with seats and cushions, buildings and courtyards, with its ravishing trees laden with fruit and flowers in every season and the blossoming Ashoka trees, it resembled the effulgence of the rising sun.

Seated there, Maruti never wearied of gazing on those lovely woods, whose foliage was almost concealed by hundreds of birds disporting themselves there and the beauty of those

Ashoka trees, bending under the weight of their flowers, so that their blossoming seemed to extend to their very roots, dispelled all sorrow. The entire region seemed ablaze with the brilliance of the Karnikara and Kimshuka trees in flower; the giant-rooted Punnaga, Saptaparna, Champaka and Uddalaka blazed forth in blossom and there were thousands of Ashoka trees some of a golden colour, some like flames of fire and some as dark as collyrium so that the whole place resembled the Garden of Nandana or the enchanting domain of Chaitaratha or even surpassed them. This celestial unimaginably beautiful region was like a second heaven, having flowers for its constellations or a fifth ocean, its pearls being the blossom scattered there. Planted with trees, which bloomed in every season, emitting honeyed scents, that garden was filled with the cries of birds and beasts and redolent with exquisite scents, a delicious spot, equal to that King of Mountains, a second Gandhamadana.

Now, in that Ashoka Grove, that lion among monkeys observed, at a short distance, a splendid temple as white as Mount Kailasha, flawless, supported by a thousand pillars, its steps of coral, its floors of refined gold, dazzlingly beautiful, blinding to the eyes and of such a height that it seemed to kiss the sky.

Then, all at once, he beheld a woman, in soiled raiment, surrounded by female titans and she was emaciated through fasting, sorrowful, heaving frequent sighs, immaculate as the moon's disc in its first quarter, resplendent with a radiance which now shone but dimly so that she seemed like a flame wreathed in smoke.

Clad in a soiled robe of yellow silk, divested of every ornament, she resembled a lotus pool stripped of its flowers. Oppressed, racked with grief and tormented, she was like unto Rohini pursued by Ketu. Her face bathed in tears, distressed, worn out by privation, plunged in anxiety and separated from her kith and kin, no longer able to behold Rama and Lakshmana but only the titans, she appeared like a gazelle surrounded by a pack of hounds.

With her long hair resembling a black serpent, hanging down her back, she looked like the earth with its dark blue

forests in the rainy season. That large-eyed lady, worthy of happiness, not having known adversity till that hour, sunk in woe and emaciated was attired in soiled raiment.

Then Hanuman, beholding her, for many reasons deduced that it was Sita and reflected :—" That princess, borne away by the titan, able to change his shape at will, must be this woman before me."

Her face shone like the full moon and she possessed beautiful brows and gracefully rounded breasts ; by her radiance she dispelled the darkness in all regions ; her neck was of a bluish tint, her lips like the Bimba fruit, her waist slender and her carriage full of dignity, her eyes, resembling lotus petals equalled those of Rati, the beloved spouse of Manmatha, lovely as the moon, adored by all.

Now that youthful woman of graceful form was seated on the ground practising austerity like a female ascetic and that timid lady was heaving frequent sighs like the consort of the Serpent King.

Entangled in a mighty web of sorrow, her beauty was veiled like a flame enveloped in smoke or a traditional text obscured by dubious interpretation or wealth that is melting away or faith that is languishing or hope that is almost extinguished or perfection unattained on account of obstacles or an intellect which is darkened or fame tarnished by calumny.

Distracted by her separation from Rama, tormented by the presence of the female titans, her eyes, like a young doe's ranged here and there searching everywhere in her distress. Tears streamed from her eyes with their arched brows and dark lashes and, her features altered, she sighed again and again. That unfortunate one, worthy of every decoration, now bereft of all, covered with stains, resembled the King of the Stars obscured by heavy cloud. Beholding Sita in that pitiable state, Hanuman was perplexed as one whose learning is lost for lack of sustained endeavour and, seeing her without ornaments, he recognised her with difficulty as a text that is wrongly construed. Beholding that large-eyed and irreproachable princess, Hanuman concluded from her many distinctive characteristics that it must indeed be Sita.

Perceiving on her person such ornaments as had been

described by Rama at the time of his departure, such as the Svadangstras and jewelled armlets, which were now darkened by dust and neglect, nevertheless, they appeared to Hanuman to be those mentioned to him and he reflected :—" Those which were cast off by Sita on the way, I do not see but those she preserved are certainly here.

" The rich silken mantle shining like Kanaka gold, which she let fall, was found by the monkeys caught in a tree and the valuable ornaments cast off by her fell on the earth with a tinkling sound. The robe she now wears is exceedingly worn but its colour remains and resembles her own radiance. Here is the one for whom Rama has suffered torment through affection, pity, grief and love: through affection in consequence of his beloved spouse being borne away; through pity, by his inability to protect her who is dependent on him; through grief, at her loss, and through love by his separation from her. Verily from the grace of her person and her beauty, that resembles his, this lady of dark eyes must be his spouse.

She has her mind fixed on him, and he on her, it is on account of this that they are able to survive. Indeed the Lord Rama has achieved a great feat by still existing separated from her and not yielding up his life in grief."

Having beheld Sita, the Son of Pavana allowed his thoughts to fly to Rama, to whom he silently offered obeisance, and to that princess also.

CHAPTER 16

Hanuman's Reflections on seeing Sita

HAVING offered obeisance to Sita who was worthy of homage, and also to Rama of gentle conduct, that bull among monkeys became absorbed in thought once more.

Reflecting awhile, his eyes full of tears on account of Sita, that sagacious monkey, Hanuman, gave voice to his distress in the following words :—

" None can withstand the force of destiny, since Sita, the consort of the illustrious brother of Lakshmana ever obedient

to his preceptors, has met with this misfortune. Conversant with the prowess of Rama and the sagacious Lakshmana, that divine lady is no more perturbed than is the Ganges at the approach of the rainy season. In character, age, conduct and family, they are equal and Raghava is worthy of Vaidehi, that one of dark eyes, who is his."

Seeing Sita, radiant as newly minted gold and who resembled Lakshmi beloved of the worlds, Hanuman approaching Rama in thought, said :—

" On account of this large-eyed lady, the mighty Bali was slain, and Kabanda, equal to him in strength ; for her, the mighty demon Viradha, despite his renowned prowess, also succumbed in the forest under the thrusts of the valiant Rama, as Shambara under Mahendra's blows. It was for her that fourteen thousand demons of outstanding exploits were pierced by Rama's arrows resembling tongues of fire in Janasthana. Khara too was brought low on the field of battle ; Trishiras was overthrown and the mighty Dushana also by the righteous Raghava. And it was on her account that that supreme and inaccessible kingdom of the monkeys belonging to Bali was acquired by Sugriva, renowned in the Three Worlds ; it is for this large-eyed damsel, that the effulgent Lord of the Waters has been crossed by me and this city explored. Methinks that if Rama had turned the whole earth, with its boundaries, upside down for her sake, it were fitting ! Were the dominion of the Three Worlds on one side and Sita, born of Janaka, on the other, the former would not equal a fraction of the latter ; such is the virtuous daughter of the magnanimous King of Mithila, who is wholly devoted to her lord. She, as a field was being dug, rose from a furrow which the blade of the plough had turned, covered with dust which gleamed like the pollen of a lotus ; she, the eldest daughter-in-law of King Dasaratha, who was full of courage and nobility and was never known to retreat in battle ; she, the beloved consort of the faithful and dutiful Rama, knower of his own Self, is now in the power of the titans.

" Renouncing every pleasure, actuated by love of her lord, disregarding the inevitable privations, she entered the beautiful forest to live on fruit and roots, ever engaged in the service of

her spouse and considered herself to have attained the peak of felicity there, as if it were the palace itself. This lady, whose limbs resemble Kanaka gold and who was ever wont to smile when conversing, now suffers unimaginable woes and Raghava, like a thirsty man panting for a stream, sighs for the sight of that noble woman oppressed by Ravana. Reunited with her, Raghava will enjoy felicity once more, as a king who has been deprived of his throne rejoices on regaining it.

" Deprived of all comfort and pleasure, far from her kinsmen, she preserves her life in the hope of seeing Rama and being reunited with him. Oblivious of the titans and the trees covered with fruit and flowers, her spirit is wholly absorbed in the thought of Rama. For a woman the greatest decoration is her lord and Sita, though incomparably beautiful, no longer shines in Rama's absence. It is only Rama's heroism that makes it possible for him to continue living separated from his consort and prevents him from being overwhelmed with grief. This lady of dark eyes, resembling the moonlight, worthy of happiness, is now utterly wretched and my heart is troubled. Patient as the earth, this lady whose eyes resemble lotuses, who was formerly protected by Rama and Lakshmana, lying at the foot of a tree, is being guarded by demons of hideous aspect. Like a waterlily snapped by the frost, the daughter of Janaka, her beauty faded, is fainting under the rain of misfortunes and, like a doe separated from the herd, is fallen into this distress. The Ashoka trees with their boughs bending under the weight of their blossom seem to increase her grief, as also the moon of pure beams that is rising in this spring season."

Reflecting thus, that valiant monkey, being convinced that it was Sita, stationed himself in the Shingshapa tree.

CHAPTER 17

Description of the Female Titans who guarded Sita

THEN the moon, pure as a waterlily, rose in the stainless heavens, sailing through the firmament like a swan floating on blue waters.

As if to aid him with her light, that pure and clear orb covered the Son of Pavana with her cool rays.

Thereupon that monkey beheld Sita endowed with a moon-like countenance who, under the load of grief, resembled a heavily laden ship foundering in the waves. And gazing on Vaidehi, Hanuman, born of Maruta, observed a number of grim-visaged titan women at a distance, some with but a single eye or ear, some with ears concealing their visage, some without ears, some with noses on their foreheads, some possessed of disproportionately large heads and long necks, some with sparse hair and others covered with hair so that they appeared to be wrapped in a woollen cloth ; the ears and brows of some were set low, and their breasts and bellies protruded ; others were knock-kneed, stunted, humpbacked, crooked, dwarfed, unkempt, their mouths set awry, their eyes inflamed, their faces fearful to behold Hideous, irascible, quarrelsome, they were armed with spears, darts, hammers and mallets and some had snouts like bears or the muzzles of deer or the faces of tigers, camels, buffalo, goats and jackals and some had the feet of elephants, camels, horses and the heads of some were sunk in their breasts.

Some had a single hand or foot, some the ears of asses, horses, kine and elephants or some the ears of monkeys. Some had enormous noses, some crooked noses and some none at all, some had noses like the trunks of elephants, some had their noses fixed in their foreheads, through which they breathed like beasts. The feet of some were like elephants and some had the feet of kine, some were hairy ; some had huge heads, gigantic faces and long tongues ; some had the heads of goats, elephants, cows, pigs, horses, camels and donkeys.

These titan women of formidable appearance held spears and maces in their hands, they were ill-humoured and rejoiced in discord. Their hair was black as soot or smoke-coloured, their aspect repellant and they feasted continually, regaling themselves on wine and meat without surcease, their bodies being spattered with blood from the flesh they consumed.

That foremost of monkeys surveyed those titan women whose appearance caused his hair to stand on end and who were seated in a circle round the many-branched tree under

which the divine and irreproachable Janaki stood. And the graceful Hanuman beheld that daughter of Janaka bereft of her radiance, consumed with grief, her locks soiled with dust, like a star which has fallen on the earth its merits exhausted, Sita, famed throughout the worlds for her fidelity, yet with little hope of being re-united with her lord.

Stripped of her jewels, she whose chief ornament was her devotion to her lord, held captive by Ravana, appeared like a female elephant separated from the herd who has been attacked by a lion or like the moonlight enveloped in cloud at the end of the rainy season. Her beauty dimmed, she resembled a stringed instrument that one has ceased to pluck and has laid aside. Far from her lord, that illustrious one had fallen under the sway of the titans without having merited it. Sunk in an ocean of grief, surrounded by those titan women in the midst of the Ashoka Grove, she looked like Rohini about to be devoured by Rahu and, beholding her there, Hanuman thought she resembled a creeper divested of its blooms. Having lost her radiance, her limbs covered with dust, with her hidden grace she looked like a lotus spattered with mud.

The monkey, Hanuman, beheld that youthful woman, whose eyes resembled a doe's, clothed in a soiled and tattered cloth and though that blessed one was shorn of her beauty, yet her soul did not lose its transcendency, upheld as it was by the thought of Rama's glory and safeguarded by her own virtue.

Beholding Sita, whose eyes, wide with fear, resembled a doe's, casting her glances here and there like a fawn and consuming the trees and their leaves with her sighs, like a mountainous wave rising from the ocean of adversity, incomparably beautiful with her slender limbs and graceful form, bereft of ornaments, Maruti experienced a great felicity; and Hanuman wept tears of joy at this fortunate meeting and silently offered obeisance to Rama.

Having bowed down to Rama and Lakshmana, the valiant Hanuman, filled with happiness on having beheld Sita, remained there wholly concealed.

CHAPTER 18

Ravana goes to the Ashoka Grove

SURVEYING the woods filled with flowering trees, desirous of beholding Sita closely and the night being almost spent, towards dawn, Hanuman heard the chanting of the Vedas by those among the titans conversant with the holy Shastras and the six supplementary portions.[1]

Then the mighty ten-headed Lord of the Titans awoke to the sound of auspicious music, delightful to the ear and, waking, that great and powerful king, his garlands and attire in disarray, remembered Vaidehi. Passionately enamoured of her, that titan filled with pride could not restrain his desire.

Thereupon, adorned with every kind of ornament, gorgeously robed, he entered the Ashoka Grove filled with innumerable trees, laden with fruit and flowers of every kind with pools embellished with lotuses and lilies, enlivened by birds of rare beauty ecstatic with love and sculptured wolves wonderful to behold.

Dashagriva gazed on those avenues with their arches of gold and gems, thronged with deer of every sort and carpeted with the fruit that had fallen on the earth. And one hundred damsels, daughters of the Gods and Gandharvas, followed in the train of the son of Poulastya, resembling the nymphs who follow Mahendra and some carried lamps of gold whilst others bore chanwaras and fans in their hands. Some carrying water in golden ewers, walked ahead, others following with a golden seat and round cushions and one on his right bore a cup encrusted with gems and filled with wine whilst another carried a canopy resembling a swan, golden-ribbed like the moon and having a handle of fine gold.

In this way, the most beautiful of Ravana's wives, their eyes heavy with sleep and wine followed their august lord like

[1] Grammer, Prosody, Astronomy, Pronunciation, the meaning of unusual terms and Ritual.

flashes of lightning following a cloud. Their bracelets and necklets of pearl, swung to and fro, their sandal-paste was effaced and their hair hung loose while drops of perspiration stood on the brows of those women of lovely mien who stumbled on account of the effects of wine and sleep, and the sweat had caused the flowers that adorned them to wither and their locks were full of shreds from their garlands; in this way, those women of tender appearance full of pride and affection, followed the King of the Titans.

And that powerful lord, the slave of his desires, his heart fixed on Sita, proceeded at a slow pace.

Then the monkey heard the sound of the bells on the women's girdles and anklets, and the joy of Maruta beheld Ravana of inconceivable prowess, whose energy and valour were unimaginable, as he entered the gate; and he was illumined on all sides by the innumerable lamps, fed with fragrant oil, which were carried by those damsels and, intoxicated with pride, desire and wine, his eyes of a coppery red, he looked like Kandarpa himself bereft of his bow. He adjusted his magnificent cloak, decorated with flowers, stainless as the foam of Amrita when churned, and which flung back was held by a clasp.

Hanuman, concealed behind the curtain of leafy branches, stared at him as he approached and from his hiding place, that elephant among monkeys beheld that mighty king, Ravana, surrounded by beautiful and youthful brides, with majestic strides enter that grove, which re-echoed to the cry of deer and birds. Already intoxicated, adorned with priceless ornaments, possessing pointed ears resembling darts, full of energy, that Son of Vaishravas, the Lord of the Titans, appeared surrounded by lovely women, as the moon amidst the stars, and that illustrious monkey, beholding him, reflected :—

"This is the long-armed Ravana who was formerly sleeping in that sumptuous apartment in the centre of the city."

Then the valiant Hanuman, born of Maruta, despite his great courage and though highly effulgent, found himself eclipsed by Ravana's glory and effaced himself among the leafy branches. Ravana however, eager to see that dark-eyed Sita of faultless limbs, whose breasts touched each other, and whose tresses were black, strode on.

CHAPTER 19

Sita's Grief

BEHOLDING Ravana, the Lord of the Titans, endowed with youth and beauty, wearing gorgeous raiment and priceless jewels, that irreproachable princess trembled like a palm agitated by the wind and, covering her breasts and belly with her hands, seeking to conceal them, shrank away.

Dashagriva gazed on Vaidehi, who was guarded by companies of female titans and that unfortunate One, given over to grief, resembled a ship foundering in the sea.

Seated on the naked ground, Sita who was fixed in virtue, resembled a branch severed from a tree that has fallen to earth. Her limbs covered with a soiled cloth, she, who was worthy of ornaments, now no longer adorned, resembled a lotus stalk stained with mud and, though radiant, her beauty was dimmed.

In imagination, she took refuge with that lion among men, Rama, her mind a chariot drawn by the steeds of resolution and that charming princess, devoted to Rama, emaciated, weeping, separated from her kinsfolk, was a prey to anxiety and grief and saw no end to her misfortune. Rocking herself to and fro, she resembled the female of the King of the Snakes under the spell of an incantation or the planet Rohini pursued by Dhumaketu or a saintly and virtuous woman of a noble house who finds herself, through marriage, placed in a low-born family. She resembled a great reputation that has been lost or a faith that has been disregarded or a mind that has become clouded or a hope destroyed, a future shattered, an order misinterpreted, a region obliterated at the destruction of the world or an offering rejected by the Gods, a night on which the full moon is obscured by clouds or a lotus pool laid waste, an army bereft of its warriors, a moon under eclipse, a dried up river, an altar which has been desecrated or a flame

that has been extinguished or a lotus pool bereft of flowers, its birds struck with terror agitated by the trumpeting of elephants.

In separation from her lord, consumed with grief, she appeared like a river whose waters have run dry and on account of her limbs not having been washed, she resembled night during the period of the waning moon. That lovely and graceful woman, accustomed to a palace filled with precious gems, now, with wasted limbs, resembled the stalk of a lotus freshly plucked and wilting in the sun.

As the female elephant which has been captured, chained to a stake, grieving for its mate, sighs again and again, so seemed she. Her long dark tresses, utterly neglected, lay along her back so that she appeared like the earth covered with a dark forest at the end of the rainy season. Tortured by hunger, sorrow, anxiety and fear, emaciated, desolate, weakened by abstinence and given over to austerity, stricken with grief, resembling a goddess, her hands were joined offering prayers to Rama for the destruction of Ravana.

And beholding that blameless Maithili with her beautiful dark eyes and graceful lashes, Ravana, to his own destruction, sought to seduce her.

CHAPTER 20

Ravana begs Sita to wed him

Thereupon Ravana approaching Sita, who was helpless, surrounded by female titans and vowed to a life of austerity, with sweet words and courteous gestures said to her :—

" O Thou whose thighs resemble the trunk of an elephant, who, beholding me dost seek to conceal thy breasts and thy body as if thou didst fear me, O Lady of large eyes, I love thee. Be gracious to me, O Thou of charming looks, who art adored by all the world ! There is no man present here nor any titan able to change his form at will therefore banish the fear which I inspire in thee, O Sita.

"It has ever been the unquestioned and special privilege of titans to unite themselves with the wives of others, either taking them of their own free will or bearing them away by force. In spite of this, O Maithili, I shall not lay hands on thee since thou hast no affection for me but, for myself, I am completely under thy sway, therefore trust in me and respond to my love. O Goddess, have no fear of me, take courage, O Dear One, and do not let thyself be consumed with grief. To wear but a single plait, to lie on the earth in soiled attire and fast unnecessarily does not become thee. In my company, O Maithili, do thou enjoy garlands, perfumes, sandal, ornaments, wine, rich beds and seats, singing, dancing and music. Thou art a pearl among women, do not remain in this condition, adorn thyself as heretofore. Having united thyself with me, O Lady of Lovely Form, what will not be thine?

"Thine enchanting youth is passing away, which like the water of a river, once gone, does not return. O Thou of Fair Looks, the creator of thy loveliness, Vishvakrita, after devising thee, ceased from his work for I see none who is equal to thee in loveliness and grace! Who, having seen thee, resplendent with beauty, could withstand thee O Vaidehi? Even Brahma Himself is moved, how much more other beings? O Thou whose countenance resembles the moon, on whatever part of thy body mine eyes rest, my gaze is riveted. O Maithili, do thou become my consort and renounce this thy folly. Become the foremost queen of these innumerable and lovely women who belong to me. O Timid One, all the treasure I have won throughout the worlds I offer thee as also my kingdom. O Sportive Damsel, for thy sake, having subjugated the entire earth with its many cities, I will confer them on King Janaka. None on this earth can withstand my prowess; behold mine immeasurable valour in battle! Did not the Celestials and the Demons find me irresistible on the battlefield as I broke through their ranks shattering their standards?

"Therefore yield to my desire and attire thyself in splendid robes, letting brilliant gems adorn thy person. O Timid One, enjoy every comfort and luxury according to thy pleasure, divert thyself and distribute land and treasure to others. Live happily depending on my support and exercise supreme

authority. By my favour, all thy relatives shall share thy felicity. Observe my prosperity and glory, O Gentle Lady, what canst thou hope from Rama who is clothed in robes of bark? O Fortunate One, Rama has been deprived of his kingdom and is bereft of his might, he practises asceticism, his couch is the bare earth, indeed it is doubtful whether he still lives. O Vaidehi, Rama will never be able to find thee, thou who resemblest a star veiled by dark clouds preceded by cranes. Raghava will never rescue thee from my hands, as Hiranyakashipu was not able to recover his consort Kirti, who had fallen under the sway of Indra.

"O Lady of Sweet Smiles, O Thou of lovely teeth and beautiful eyes, thou dost ravish my heart as Suparna carried away a serpent. Although thy robe is torn and stained and thou art stripped of ornaments, seeing thee, my mind turns away from all my other consorts. O Daughter of Janaka, do thou hold sway over all the women in my harem, who are endowed with every accomplishment. O Princess of raven locks, these women, the foremost among the beauties of the world, shall be thy slaves and attend on thee as the Apsaras attend on Shri. O Graceful Princess, enjoy the pleasures of the world with me and the riches of Kuvera to the utmost of thy desires. O Goddess, neither in asceticism, strength, prowess, wealth nor fame is Rama equal to me. Therefore drink, eat, enjoy thyself and indulge in every pleasure. I shall confer on thee immense wealth, nay, the whole world.

"Do thou satisfy all thy desires in my company, O Timid One, and let thy relatives share thy felicity also. Adorned with dazzling golden bracelets, O Beautiful One, in my company range the groves of flowering trees on the shores of the sea where the black bees hum."

CHAPTER 21

Sita rejects Ravana's Advances with disdain

HEARING the words of that terrible titan, Sita, overwhelmed with grief, answered in a faint and feeble voice. The un-

fortunate Sita, afflicted and trembling, faithful to her lord and anxious to preserve her virtue, her heart fixed on Rama, placed a straw between Ravana and herself and with a sweet smile answered him, saying :—

" Take back thy heart and set it on thine own consorts. As a sinner may not aspire to heaven, so shouldst thou not expect to win me. That which should never be done and is condemned in a woman faithful to her lord, I shall never do. Born in a noble House, I have been joined to a pious family."

Having spoken thus to Ravana, the virtuous Vaidehi, turning her back on him, continued :—

" It is not meet that I become thy wife since I am united to another. Do thy duty and follow the rules laid down by men of integrity. The wives of others, like thine own, are deserving of protection, O Prowler of the Night. Do thou furnish a good example and enjoy thine own consorts. That wretch who, in the inconstancy and levity of his heart, is not satisfied with his own wives, will be brought to misery by those of others. Either no pious men exist here or thou dost not follow their example, since thy mind is perverse and turns from what is virtuous; or the wise having uttered sage counsel, thou, to the destruction of the titans, dost ignore them.

" Prosperity, kingdom and city are all brought to nought in the hands of a vicious monarch who is not master of himself, hence Lanka, overflowing with treasure, having thee for her king, will suffer destruction 'ere long. O Ravana, that wicked being who brings about his own downfall, succumbs, to the delight of all. When thou meetest with thine end, this evil deed will cause the oppressed to say : ' Fortunate are we that this great tyrant has fallen.'

" Thou art not able to tempt me with wealth and riches ; as the light of the sun cannot be separated from the sun so do I belong to Raghava. Having rested on the arm of that Lord of Men, how should I depend on any other ? Like unto the spiritual truth known to a brahmin faithful to his vows, I belong to the Lord of the World alone and am lawfully wedded to him. It is to thine own advantage to restore me to Rama, wretched as I am, like unto a she-elephant anxiously awaiting her mate in the forest. It behoveth thee to seek Rama's

friendship, that lion among men, if thou desireth to preserve Lanka and dost not wish to bring about thine own destruction. He is wise, conversant with every duty and ever eager to serve those who seek his protection; form an alliance with him if thou desirest to survive. Seek to conciliate Rama, who is full of devotion to those who take refuge in him and humbly conduct me to him once more. If thou dost bring me back to the greatest of the Raghus, thy well-being is assured but if thou dost act otherwise thou art doomed. Thou mayest evade the thunderbolt of Indra, even death himself may overlook thee but there will be no refuge for thee from the fury of Raghava, that lord of men, when thou dost hear the terrible twanging of Rama's bow resembling the thunderbolt hurled by Indra. Soon shall those arrows, bearing the impress of Rama and Lakshmana, like serpents with flaming jaws, penetrate Lanka and those shafts, decorated with heron's plumes, shall cover the whole city annihilating the titans. As Vainateya bears away great reptiles, so shall that eagle, Rama, speedily bear away the titans.

" And like unto Vishnu wresting the radiant Shri from the Asuras by covering the worlds in three strides, so shall my lord, the destroyer of his foes, recover me from thee.

" This cowardly deed has been perpetrated by thee in order to revenge thyself for the destruction of Janasthana and the hosts of the titans. In the absence of these two brothers, those lions among men who had gone forth hunting, didst thou carry me away, O Vile Wretch; but, dog that thou art, thou didst not dare stand before those tigers, Rama and Lakshmana! Wealth and friends will be of no avail to thee in conflict with them and thou shalt be defeated as the one-handed Vritra who entered into combat with the two-handed Indra.

" Soon shall my protector, Rama, accompanied by Saumitri, draw out thy life's breaths, as the sun with its rays dries up shallow water.

Whether thou takest refuge in the abode of Kuvera or terrified, descendest into Varuna's realm, thou shalt assuredly perish, struck down by the son of Dasaratha, like a mighty tree felled by lightning."

CHAPTER 22

Ravana's Threats

To this stern speech from the gracious Sita, the King of the Titans replied harshly :—

" In the world it is said the more gentleness one manifests towards a woman, the more responsive she becomes, but the more kindness I show to thee the more thou dost repulse me. Verily only the love I bear thee restrains my wrath, as a skilful charioteer controls the horses who seek to leave the road. Mighty indeed is the power of love, for even if the object of his affection invoke his anger, man covers her with pity and tenderness. It is on this account, O Lady of lovely mien, that I do not slay thee, thou dost merit death and dishonour, thou who delightest in asceticism without reason. For each and every harsh word which thou hast addressed to me, thou meritest a dreadful end, O Maithili."

Having spoken thus to Sita, the Princess of Videha, Ravana, Lord of the Titans, filled with indignation, added :—" I shall grant thee two months as the term assigned to thee, after which thou must share my bed. If thou should'st refuse, my cooks shall mince thy limbs for my morning repast."

Hearing these threats addressed by the King of the Titans to Janaki, the daughters of the Gods and Gandharvas were exceedingly perturbed and, by the expression of their lips and eyes and their gestures sought to reassure Sita thus menaced by him.

Encouraged by them, Sita, fortified by her virtue and her pride in Rama, addressed Ravana, the Lord of the Titans, in his own interests, saying :—

" It appears that there is none in this city who desires thy welfare and therefore seeks to prevent thee from this despicable deed. Who in the Three Worlds would desire to possess the chaste consort of the high-souled One, who resembles Indra's Sachi ? O Vilest of Demons, how wilt thou escape the con-

sequences of this insult offered to Rama's consort, he whose valour is immeasurable? Like unto an infuriated elephant, encountering a hare in the forest, so shalt thou, the wretched hare, meet with that elephant Rama. Thou dost not fear to rail at the Chief of the Ikshwakus so long as thou art not in his presence. Why do not those cruel, terrible, coppery eyes of thine fall out, looking on me so lustfully, O Ignoble Creature? O Contemptible Wretch, when thou didst threaten the spouse of that high-souled Rama, the daughter-in-law of King Dasaratha, why did not thy tongue dry up? O Ten-necked One, by the power of my asceticism, I could reduce thee to ashes instantly had I Rama's mandate. On account of my consuming virtue and ascetic observances, I could never have been wrested from Rama, were it not that thine evil act was to be the cause of thy destruction, O Dashagriva! Assisted by the brother of Kuvera and proud of thine own heroism, thou didst lure Rama from the hermitage and succeed in bearing me away by stealth."

Hearing Sita's words, Ravana, the King of the Titans, cast ferocious glances at her. Like a mass of black clouds, with his enormous arms and neck, endowed with an elephantine gait, his eyes smouldering, his tongue like a darting flame, of immense stature, wearing a plumed diadem, covered with necklaces, sprinkled with perfume, decked with garlands and, bracelets of gold, his waist encircled with a dark blue belt so that it resembled the Mandara mountain encompassed by the snake at the time of the churning of the ocean; with his vast arms, the Lord of the Titans looked like a mountain with twin peaks. Adorned with earrings gleaming like the rising sun, he resembled a hill between two Ashoka trees enveloped in crimson flowers and buds or like the wish-fulfilling tree or spring incarnate or an altar in a crematorium.

Then Ravana cast furious glances from his bloodshot eyes at the Princess of Videha and, hissing like a serpent, addressed her, saying:—" O Thou who art attached to that wretch without resource or moral sense, I shall destroy thee to-day as the sun's radiance is obliterated at the time of dusk."

Having spoken thus to Maithili, Ravana, the oppressor of his foes, looked at those female titans of formidable appearance,

some of whom had a single eye or ear, some enormous ears and some the ears of kine or elephants. Some had ears that hung down and some none at all, some had the feet of elephants, some of horses, some of kine, some were hairy, others possessed but a single eye and foot, some had enormous feet and others none at all. Some had heads and necks of inordinate size, some enormous chests and bellies, some disproportionately large mouths and eyes or long tongues and nails and some had no nose or possessed jaws like lions, some had mouths like oxen or snouts like pigs.

Then Ravana, transfiixing those titans with his glance, said to them :—" Ye Titans seek by fair or foul means, by threats or persuasion or honeyed words or gifts to induce Sita to look on me with favour."

Repeating his command again and again, the King of the Titans filled with desire and anger began to inveigh against Janaki, whereupon a female titan named Dhanyamalini, approaching Dashagriva, embraced him and said :—

" O Great King, enjoy thyself with me, what need hast thou for this human being who is wretched and whose countenance is pale ? O King of the Titans, it is not with her that the Gods have destined thee to taste the exquisite pleasures that are the reward of the strength of thine arms. He who loves one who is unwilling exposes himself to torment, whereas he whose love is reciprocated, enjoys perfect happiness."

Having said this, the female titan drew Ravana away but he, resembling a mass of cloud, turned back, laughing scornfully.

Then Dashagriva strode away, causing the earth to tremble, and returned to his palace that shone with the brilliance of the orb of day.

Surrounding Ravana, the daughters of the Gods and Gandharvas as well as those of the Serpent Race returned to that sumptuous abode with him. Thus Ravana, distracted with desire, left the Princess of Mithila of irreproachable virtue trembling and entered his own dwelling.

CHAPTER 23

The Female Titans seek to persuade Sita to wed Ravana

HAVING spoken thus to Maithili and issued his commands to the titan women, Ravana, the scourge of his foes, went away. And that Sovereign of the Titans having returned to his inner apartment, those women of hideous appearance bore down on Sita and, filled with ire, addressed her in harsh tones, saying:—

"Thou dost not fully value an alliance with the offspring of Poulastya the illustrious Ravana, the magnanimous Dashagriva, O Sita."

Thereafter, one among them named Ekjata, her eyes inflamed with anger addressed Sita of small belly, saying:—"According to tradition, Poulastya is the fourth of the six Prajapatis, a mind-born son of Brahma renowned in all the world, O Sita, and that glorious Ascetic Vaishravas sprang from the mind of that great Rishi whose glory equalled the Prajapatis. O Large-eyed Princess, his son was Ravana, the scourge of his foes; it behoveth thee to become the consort of that King of Titans. Why dost thou not consent, O Thou of Lovely Form?"

Thereupon another titan called Harijata, rolling her eyes that resembled a cat's, said furiously: "It is for thee to become the wife of one who defeated the thirty-three Celestials and their king in combat; dost thou not desire to be united with him who is heroic, of indomitable prowess and never turns back in battle? Renouncing his cherished and beloved Queen Mandodari, that mighty King Ravana will be thine, and seek the gorgeous inner apartment, enriched by thousands of women adorned with jewels, and thou wilt be the object of his worship!"

There followed another titan by name Vikata, who said: "He who again and again triumphs over the Gandharvas, Nagas and Danavas by his valour in battle has made advances

to thee, why dost thou not wish to be the wife of that illustrious Lord of Titans, Ravana, who is endowed with riches ?"

Thereafter the titan, Durmukhi spoke saying :—" O Lady of Lovely Lashes, why dost thou not yield to him, in fear of whom the sun dares not shine nor the wind blow, at whose command the trees shower down their blooms and the hills and clouds loose their floods.

" O Beautiful One, why dost thou not consent to be the consort of that King of kings, Ravana ? We speak thus for thy welfare ; accede to our request, O Goddess of Sweet Smiles or thou shalt surely die."!

CHAPTER 24

Their Menaces

THEREUPON all those titans of hideous appearance, unitedly reproached Sita in harsh and unpleasing words, saying :—

" Why dost thou not consent to dwell in that inner apartment abounding in costly couches ? O Lady, thou prizest union with a mere man ; dismiss Rama from thy thoughts for assuredly thou wilt not see him more. Live happily with Ravana, the Lord of the Titans as thy consort who owns the treasure of the Three Worlds. Thou art a woman, O Irreproachable Beauty, and for this dost mourn a man who is banished from his kingdom and who leads a life of misery."

Hearing the words of those titans, Sita, her lotus eyes filled with tears, answered them, saying :—" What you have uttered is immoral and wholly reprehensible and will never find acceptance with me. A mortal woman may not become the wife of a demon. Devour me, if you wish, I will never accede to your request. Poor or deprived of his kingdom, he who is my husband is my spiritual preceptor and I shall ever follow him, as Suvarchala follows the sun or the blessed Sachi remains at Indra's side or Arundhati near Vasishtha or Rohini by Shashin or Lopamudra by Agastya, Sukanya by Syavana,

Savitri by Satyavat, Shrimati by Kapila, Madayanti by Sandasa, Keshini by Sagara and Damayanti, the daughter of King Bhima by her Lord Naishada."

These words of Sita infuriated those titan women, who had been sent by Ravana and they overwhelmed her with hard and bitter reproaches while Hanuman crouched silently in the Shingshapa tree. And that monkey heard those demons threatening Sita in this wise.

Surrounding Sita on every side, licking their burning lips again and again and, armed with spears, they menaced her in a paroxysm of rage, saying :

" Dost thou think that the great King of the Titans, Ravana, is not worthy to be thy lord ? "

Threatened by those terrible looking titan women, the lovely Sita, wiping away her tears, took refuge beneath the Shingshapa tree, where, surrounded by those women, that large-eyed princess, overcome with distress, seated herself. And all those hideous demons overwhelmed her with reproaches, as, clad in a mud-stained sari, reduced to the last extremity, her countenance wan, she remained absorbed in her grief.

Thereupon, a grim-visaged demon, named Vinata, having hideous teeth, and a protruding belly, cried out angrily :—

" O Sita, thou hast demonstrated thy devotion to thy lord sufficiently but all excess leads to suffering. May good betide thee ! We are satisfied, thou hast preserved the conventions common among men, now hear what I say to thee for thy good ! Do thou take Ravana for thy lord, he, the chief of the titan host who, like unto Vasava, triumphs over his enemies and is brave, liberal and gracious to all beings. Forsaking that wretched wight, Ramachandra, take Ravana as thy husband ! Thy person, sprinkled with celestial perfume and adorned with excellent ornaments, do thou, O Vaidehi, like unto Swaha, the consort of Agni or the goddess Sachi, wife of Indra, from to-day become the Queen of the Worlds ! What shalt thou do with Rama who is wretched and has but a short time to live ? If thou dost not follow my counsel, that very instant we shall devour thee."

Thereafter, another titan, named Vikata, with pendulous breasts, clenching her fists angrily addressed Sita, saying :—

" O Foolish Daughter of Mithila's King, out of compassion and forbearance, we have endured thy harsh speech and yet thou dost not follow our sage and expedient counsel. Thou hast been transported to the further shore of the ocean which is inaccessible to others; Ravana has imprisoned thee in his private apartments to be guarded by us, O Maithili, not even Indra himself can liberate thee. Cease from weeping and lamenting and yield thyself up to pleasure and delight, O Sita; disport thyself with the King of the Titans. O Timid Damsel, dost thou not know how swiftly the youth of women is gone? Ere it fades, pass thy days happily. Till then range the enchanting woods, groves and hills with the sovereign of the titans, O Thou of Sparkling Eyes! Thousands of women will attend on thee if thou dost take the lord of all the titans as thy consort, but if thou dost not follow my counsel, I will tear thy heart out and feast on it, O Maithili."

Then another titan of ferocious looks, named Chandari, brandishing a great spear, said: " Seeing this youthful woman, with the eyes of a young doe who was carried away by Ravana and brought hither, whose breast is now trembling with fear, I feel an intense desire to feast on her liver, spleen, breast, heart, limbs and head."

At this, a female titan called Praghasa, said: " Of what use to argue about her? Let us stop the breath in the throat of this heartless woman and inform Ravana of her death. He will undoubtedly say: ' Do ye devour her '."

The titan, Ajamukhi then said: " Let us divide her equally; disputation is unpleasing to me; let our favourite drink and different garlands be brought hither speedily."

At that moment the demon Shurpanakha said: " I am in full accord with Ajamukhi's words, let wine that dispels all anxiety be brought without delay. Gorged with human flesh, we will dance in the Nikumbhila Grove."

Hearing the monstrous titan's threats, Sita, who resembled the daughter of a God, her endurance at an end, burst into tears.

CHAPTER 25

Sita gives way to Despair

THE many barbarous threats of the titan women, caused the daughter of Janaka to give way to tears and the noble Vaidehi, terror stricken, in a voice broken by sobs, answered them, saying :—

" A mortal woman may not be the wife of a titan ; tear me to pieces if you will but I shall never follow your counsels."

Surrounded by those demons and threatened by Ravana, Sita, who resembled the daughter of a God, could find no refuge anywhere and, seized with violent trembling, she shrank away from them, as a fawn in the forest, separated from the herd, surrounded by wolves. Clinging to the flowering branch of an Ashoka tree, sunk in grief, Sita bethought herself of her lord. Streams of tears bathed her lovely breast and overcome with affliction, she could see no end to her distress. Like a plantain tree uprooted by the storm, she lay, the fear that the titan women inspired in her blanching her cheek; her long thick plait moving to and fro as she shook, resembling a gliding serpent.

Groaning in her grief and overcome with indignation, Maithili, weeping, began to lament, exclaiming sorrowfully:— " O Rama ! " and again, " O Lakshmana ", " O My Mother Kaushalya ", " O Sumitra ". " True indeed is the saying of the sages : ' neither man nor woman can die ere the hour strikes ', since tormented by the savage titans and separated from Rama, I am still able to survive an instant. Alas ! A woman of little virtue and wretched, I am about to die far from my protector as a laden vessel founders in the midst of the waves driven by the blast of the tempest. In the absence of my lord, I am sinking under the load of my affliction, like a river bank undermined by the current. Happy are those who are able to look upon my lord, whose eyes resemble the petals of the blossoming trees, whose gait is like a lion's and who is full of gratitude and gentle of speech. Deprived of the

presence of Rama of subdued soul, it is as hard for me to breathe as for him who has swallowed a virulent poison and henceforth my life is forfeit. What heinous fault have I committed in a previous existence that I should now have to suffer such cruel misfortune? So intense is my grief that I long to die, but alas, I am surrounded by these titan women and cannot be reunited with Rama. Cursed is the human state, cursed is dependence on others, since one may not yield up one's life when one so desires it."

CHAPTER 26

Sita prophesies the Titan's Destruction

HER face bathed in tears, with bowed head the daughter of Janaka began to lament once more and, distracted with grief, beside herself, she rolled on the earth like a colt as though she had lost her senses, crying:—

"I, the spouse of Raghava, who allowed himself to be deceived by the titans able to change their form at will, was seized by the ruthless Ravana who bore me away. Having been made captive by the titans, subject to their insults and menaces, sunk in grief and anxiety, I am no longer able to endure life. Of what use is existence, wealth or jewels to me, living amidst the demons far from Rama of the great Car? Assuredly my heart must be of iron, ageless and imperishable, since it does not break under mine affliction. Woe is me, vile and wicked creature that I am, since I still breathe, in the absence of my lord. Even my left foot shall not touch that Ranger of the Night, how should I feel any love for Ravana, a titan? He, who in his perversity seeks to seduce me, is not conversant with my nature, nor my race, nor the aversion in which he is held by me. Torn to pieces, rent limb from limb or cast into the fire, I shall never submit to Ravana, what use is there in further discussion?

"It is well known that Raghava is righteous, grateful and compassionate; that he has become pitiless is due to mine

evil karma. Will he not deliver me, he who in Janasthana destroyed fourteen thousand titans singlehanded? Even were Lanka in the midst of the sea and inaccessible, Raghava's arrows would transcend all obstacles. What can prevent the valiant Rama from rejoining his beloved wife, who has been borne away by a titan? I fear that the elder brother of Lakshmana does not know that I am here, for if he did, that warrior would not endure this affront.

"The King of the Vultures, who would have informed Rama of mine abduction, was slain by Ravana in the struggle. Great indeed was the courage manifested by Jatayu in coming to mine aid and, despite his age, seeking to destroy Ravana. Did Raghava know that I was here, this very hour, he would rid the world of titans with his flaming shafts; he would burn up Lanka, swallow the ocean and blot out the might of Ravana. From each dwelling the groans and cries of the female titans, their husbands slain, would have risen, as mine do now or even louder, and Rama, aided by Lakshmana would range the city, slaughtering the titans, for the foe instantly yields up his life, who comes face to face with them. Then Lanka, its streets filled with smoke issuing from the funeral pyres, encircled by wreaths of vultures, would soon resemble a charnel house. Soon shall I be avenged! This matter will cost you all dear, for such inauspicious omens are to be seen in Lanka, that she will soon be shorn of her splendour.

The King of the Titans, the vicious Ravana having been slain, Lanka, now prosperous and happy, will resemble a widow. Assuredly I shall soon hear the wailing of the daughters of the titans in every dwelling, mourning in their sorrow. Plunged in darkness, deprived of her glory, her valiant titans slain, the city of Lanka will perish. consumed by Rama's arrows, when that hero, the corners of whose eyes are red, learns that I am held captive in the titan's abode. The time fixed by that cruel and wicked Ravana is at hand and that vicious wretch has resolved to destroy me. To ignore what is prohibited, is the practice of these base demons. Terrible is the calamity which will follow this outrage; those titans who live on flesh are ignorant of virtue. Assuredly that titan

intends me for his morning repast; I am helpless, what can I do in the absence of my beloved? Deprived of my lord's presence, stricken with grief, not beholding Rama, the corners of whose eyes are red, may I soon see the God Vaivasvata! Nay, the elder brother of Bharata is unaware that I still live, else he and Lakshmana would have scoured the earth for me. Without doubt, overwhelmed by my foes, that warrior, the elder brother of Lakshmana has renounced his body and repaired to the Celestial Region.

Happy are the Gods, Gandharvas, Siddhas and the great Rishis who are able to look on the heroic Rama. It may be that the sagacious and royal Sage Rama, has been absorbed in the Absolute and hath no longer any need of a consort or that one who is present inspires joy, but the absent are forgotten. Perchance the fault is mine, and I have lost the right to happiness, I, the lovely Sita, separated from the illustrious Rama. Death to me is preferable to life, bereft of that magnanimous One, that great hero of imperishable exploits, the destroyer of his foes! It may be that the two brothers, those chiefs of men have laid down their arms, they who feed on the roots and woodland fruits, passing their lives in the forest or they have been put to death through treachery by the vile Ravana, the last of the titans. If that be so, then with all my heart I long for death nor is it forbidden me in my distress. Blessed are those high-souled ascetics who are illumined, their senses subdued, for whom there is neither desire nor aversion; for them, neither love nor hate gives rise to joy or pain; they are free; salutations to those great beings! Forsaken by the beloved Rama, versed in the science of the soul and having fallen into the power of the wicked Ravana, I shall yield up my life."

CHAPTER 27

Trijata's Dream

THESE words of Sita roused the female titans to great fury and some hurried away to repeat them to that vile creature, Ravana.

Then those monsters of hideous aspect approached her and began to threaten her in the same way as before with as little success and some said:

" O Wretched Sita, to-day those demons whose destruction thou hast planned, will devour thy flesh at their pleasure."

Seeing Sita threatened by those vile demons, Trijata, who was aged and prudent, said to them: " Ye Wretches, devour me, but do not lay hands on Sita, the daughter of Janaka and the beloved daughter-in-law of King Dasaratha. Last night, I had a terrible dream causing my hair to stand on end, foretelling the overthrow of the titans and the triumph of this woman's husband."

Hearing these words uttered by Trijata, all those titan women, filled with ire, terrified, demanded that she should speak further, saying :—" Do thou relate the manner of thy dream and what thou didst behold last night."

Hearing those words, falling from the lips of the titan women, Trijata began to relate the dream that had come to her in the early hours, saying :—

" I beheld a celestial chariot made of ivory, drawn by a hundred swans traversing the ethereal regions in which Raghava accompanied by Lakshmana stood clad in dazzling raiment, adorned with garlands. And I saw Sita wearing the purest white, standing on a snow-white mountain surrounded by the sea and she was re-united with Rama, as the light with the sun. And again I beheld Raghava seated on a mighty elephant possessing four tusks, resembling a hill, as also Lakshmana, whereupon those two lions among heroes, ablaze with their own effulgence, approached Janaki arrayed in dazzling robes and decked with garlands. Upon this, she mounted on the shoulders of an elephant led by her lord, appearing in the sky near the summit of that mountain! Thereafter, that lotus-eyed one, rose into the air from her husband's embrace and I beheld her wiping the sun and moon with her hand. Then that foremost among elephants with those two princes and the large-eyed Sita stood over Lanka.

" And again, in dream, I saw Rama, clothed in brilliant attire, wearing garlands, accompanied by Lakshmana, in a chariot drawn by eight white bullocks and I beheld that foremost of

men, Rama, whose essence is valour with his brother Lakshmana and Sita ascending a celestial flowery car, bright as the sun, driving towards the northern regions.

"Then I saw Ravana, lying on the earth covered in oil, shaven, attired in red, garlanded with oleander flowers, intoxicated and still drinking. And I beheld him falling from the flowery chariot, Pushpaka, on to the earth, shorn, wearing a black cloth, dragged hither and thither by a woman. Thereafter I saw him seated in a chariot drawn by asses, robed in red, with his body stained likewise, quaffing sesamum oil, laughing and dancing, his mind confused, his senses clouded, speeding towards the south. Again I saw Ravana, the Lord of the Titans, stricken with fear, fall headlong on the earth, thereafter leaping up suddenly, terrified, bemused with liquor, staggering about naked like a madman, incapable of speech yet babbling continuously, stinking and foul, resembling hell itself. Then, proceeding towards the south, he entered a lake where even the mud had dried up and a dark woman clad in red, besmeared with mud, placed a rope round the neck of Dashagriva dragging him to the region of death.

"There I beheld the mighty Kumbhakarna and all the sons of Ravana, their heads shaven, besmeared with oil. Dashagriva riding a boar, Indrajita a porpoise and Kumbhakarna a camel; only Bibishana appeared to me standing in space. under a white canopy, accompanied by four ministers. Thereafter a great company of titans wearing red garlands and raiment filed past, playing on stringed instruments, dancing and drinking. And I beheld the enchanting city of Lanka, filled with elephants, chariots and horses, her gateways and arches shattered, falling into the sea. And in Lanka, crimson with flames, the female titans were laughing and creating a terrible clamour, quaffing oil. I saw Kumbhakarna and all the other titans, dark-hued, wearing scarlet robes, falling headlong into a cesspool.

"Do ye now depart since Raghava is about to be re-united with Sita and, in extreme ire, will exterminate you all with the titans. If his beloved and revered consort, who, for his sake, followed him to the forest, is threatened and tormented by you, Raghava will never brook the insult. Enough therefore of

these invidious threats, occupy yourselves in consoling her and crave her forgiveness; you should seek to influence Vaidehi by persuasion. That unfortunate one, on whose account I had so significant a dream, is about to be delivered from her woes and re-united to her beloved and illustrious lord once more. Even after the menaces you have uttered, let us give up all harsh words and implore her forgiveness. In truth, a terrible disaster for the titans will proceed from Raghava. By casting yourselves at her feet, you may placate Maithili, the daughter of Janaka, who is able to preserve us from a great calamity. Furthermore, I do not find any blemish in that lady of large eyes nor the least defect in any of her limbs. Verily I deem the misfortune that has befallen this goddess, who does not merit adversity, has no more substance than a shadow.

"I foresee the immediate attainment of Vaidehi's desires, the destruction of the King of the Titans and the imminent triumph of Raghava. Behold the indications of great joy, held in check by that lady, in the twitching of her left eye large as a lotus petal and without apparent cause; the slight trembling of the left arm of that virtuous daughter of Videha, her left thigh too resembling an elephant's trunk is quivering, as if Raghava himself stood before her and the winged creatures nesting in the branches above her are pouring forth their song as if to announce the advent of an auspicious hour."

Thereupon, that modest and youthful woman, greatly delighted at the prospect of her husband's victory, said to them: "If this prove true I will be your protector."

CHAPTER 28

Sita's Lament

HEARING the harsh speech of that King of the Titans, Ravana, the unfortunate Sita began to tremble, as a she-elephant attacked by a lion on the edge of the forest.

Threatened by Ravana and encircled by the titans, that timid damsel gave way to despair like a young girl abandoned in a wood.

She reflected: " The sages affirm truly that death does not come before the appointed hour since, worthless creature that I am, I still live after these insults. Bereft of happiness, filled with misery, my heart must be hard indeed that it does not break into a hundred pieces this day, like the crest of a mountain struck by lightning. Nay, I am not to blame for this —I may be slain by that dreadful monster but I can no more give him my affection than a brahmin can impart the teachings of the Veda to one of low caste. If that Lord of the Worlds does not appear at the appointed hour, that vile King of the Titans will cut me to pieces with his sharp weapons as a surgeon cuts the foetus from the heart of its mother. Two months will quickly pass away and I shall have to suffer the pain of death, unhappy creature that I am, like a thief, who having disobeyed his sovereign is bound and being led to execution when the night is over.

" O Rama, O Lakshmana, O Sumitra! O Mother of Rama! O My Mothers! I am about to perish miserably as a ship foundering in the sea battered by the storm. Assuredly those two valiant princes must have fallen under the blows of that creature disguised as a deer, like a bull or lion struck by lightning. There is no doubt that it was fate in the form of a deer that deluded me, unfortunate creature that I am and in my folly I sent those two princes, Rama and Lakshmana to capture it. Alas! O Rama, O Thou of truthful vows and long arms! O Thou, whose countenance shines like the full moon! O My Life, thou, the benefactor and friend of all beings, art not aware that I am about to be put to death by the titans. For me, who have no other God than my lord, my patience, my sleeping on the bare ground, my observance of duty, my devotion to my husband have all been in vain, as a service rendered to one who is ungrateful. Vain has it been, that I have fulfilled my duty and that I am wholly devoted to thee alone since I do not behold thee and in thine absence, wasting away, pale and weak, have given up all hope of being re-united with thee. Having courageously carried out

the behests of thy sire, having fulfilled thy vow, returning from the forest, thou shalt sport with many large-eyed ladies in peace. O Rama, I, who conceived a lasting love for thee, to mine own destruction was wholly attached to thee; having practised asceticism and observed my vows, I am about to lose my life, woe unto me, unfortunate wretch that I am! Gladly would I take my life by means of poison or by sharp weapons but there is none who will bring them to me in this city of the titans."

Overcome by sorrow, reflecting for a long time, Sita undid the cord that tied her hair, saying:—"I shall hang myself with this cord and reach the abode of death."

Then the lovely Sita, whose form was full of grace, took hold of a branch of the tree under which she stood and became absorbed in the thought of Rama, Lakshmana and her kinsfolk; and many auspicious signs removing her grief and lending her courage, well-known in the world, appeared to her, indicating the advent of future well-being.

CHAPTER 29

Sita observes auspicious Portents

WHILST the irreproachable and lovely princess remained bereft of joy and full of anxiety, she beheld auspicious portents on every side, resembling willing servants attendant on a wealthy man. And the large left eye of that lady of lovely looks, with its dark pupil, began to twitch like a lotus set spinning by a fish. And her beautiful plump and rounded arm, sprinkled with sandal and aloes which ere this, had served her lord as a pillow, began to tremble again and again. Her left thigh, like unto the tapering trunk of an elephant, moved convulsively foretelling that she would soon behold Rama and the golden sari, now covered with dust, of the large-eyed Maithili, whose teeth were like the seeds of a pomegranate, slipped from her beautiful shoulders.

Comforted by these signs and others also, that foretold a happy ending, Sita of lovely lashes resembling a plant dried by the wind and sun, reviving under tardy rain, experienced a great felicity. Then her countenance, her lips like Bimba fruit, her beautiful eyes, the curve of her lashes and her sharp teeth, recovered their beauty once more as the moon issuing from the mouth of Rahu.

Her despair and exhaustion removed, her fever allayed, her grief was assuaged and her heart filled with joy and that noble lady looked as beautiful as the moon of cool rays in its waxing period.

CHAPTER 30

Hanuman's Reflections

THE valiant Hanuman who had heard all that Sita, Trijata and the titans had said, gazed on that illustrious damsel who resembled a celestial being from the Nandana Gardens and many thoughts flitted through the mind of that monkey.

He reflected: " She, who was sought in every place by thousands and millions of monkeys, is here and it is I who have found her. Engaged as a skilful spy to discover the strength of the enemy I have stolen into the city and know everything concerning the might of Ravana and the resources of the titans as also of their capital. It is for me to console the consort of that immeasurably illustrious prince, who is compassionate to all beings, for she is pining for her lord. I shall seek to gain the confidence of this lady, whose countenance resembles the full moon, who formerly was unacquainted with suffering and who cannot see any end to her woes. If I return, without having comforted that virtuous lady whose soul is overwhelmed with grief, my journey will have been in vain. In sooth, when I have departed, that illustrious Princess Janaki, giving up all hope of deliverance, will yield up her life and that long-armed warrior, whose countenance resembles the full moon, anxious to behold Sita is equally worthy of consolation.

To speak to her in the presence of these titans is impossible, what then shall I do? I am in a great dilemna. If I do not give her some reassurance in the last hour of the night, she will undoubtedly give up her life and if Rama enquires of me, 'What did Sita of slender waist say?' what answer can I give to him if I have had no converse with her? If I return without having achieved my purpose regarding Sita, Kakutstha will consume me with his fiery glance, then it were vain to urge my master to take action for Rama's sake, by placing himself at the head of his forces.

"I shall take the first opportunity offered by these titan women to reassure that sorely tried lady, yet in this insignificant form and monkey shape, if I assume a human voice and speak in sanskrita like a sage, Sita will deem me to be Ravana and she will be terrified! It is essential however that I express myself in the human tongue, how otherwise can I inspire this irreproachable lady with courage? Seeing my shape and hearing me speak, Janaki, who has been terrorised by the titans, will be seized with an even greater fear and that illustrious and large-eyed Sita will cry out, imagining me to be Ravana, who is able to change his form at will.

"Hearing her cry, the whole company of titans, armed with every kind of weapon, will form themselves into a great mass resembling death itself and, hideous and indomitable, will rush on me from every side and seek to destroy me or take me captive. Then, beholding me leap from branch to branch and climb to the tops of the highest trees, they will become exceedingly alarmed and will fill the woods with their wild cries; thereafter they will call the titans who are engaged in guarding the king's palace to their aid and, on account of their native excitability, will seize hold of every kind of weapon, spears, darts, and swords and hasten to join in the fray. Surrounded by them on all sides, if I slay that host of titans, exhausted, I shall be unable to cross the ocean or they, outnumbering me, will succeed in capturing me and, being a prisoner, that lady will reap no benefit from my attempt.

"Alternatively, in their passion for evil doing, they may even slay the daughter of Janaka, which will completely defeat the great design of Rama and Sugriva! Janaki dwells in an

inaccessible and secret place surrounded by the sea, guarded on all sides by the titans with all its approaches closed. If I am slain or captured by the titans in combat, I know of no other monkey who can cross the four hundred miles of sea. Even if I destroy thousands of titans, I should not then be able to reach the other shore of the vast ocean. Battles are hazardous and I do not like to engage in so uncertain an enterprise; what wise person would take any risk in a matter of trust? It would be a great error to frighten Vaidehi by addressing her, yet if I do not do so, she will surely perish. Undertakings often fail through an incompetent messenger unable to take advantage of time and place, as darkness is overcome by the rising sun; in such cases, whether it concerns the accomplishment or avoidance of any matter, the most widely planned projects do not succeed. Assuredly a presumptuous messenger ruins all! How shall I act therefore, so that my mission does not prove vain? How shall I show myself equal to this charge? How shall the crossing of the ocean not prove to have been useless? How can I persuade Sita to listen to me without inspiring fear in her?"

Having put all these questions to himself, Hanuman formed the following resolution:

"I shall speak to her of Rama of immortal exploits, for then his dear consort will not be afraid of me since she is wholly absorbed in the thought of her lord. In a gentle voice, uttering the name of Rama, the foremost of the Ikshwakus of subdued soul and, lauding his piety and renown in sweet accents, I shall induce Sita to listen to me. There is nothing I will not do to inspire her with confidence."

Thereupon, the mighty Hanuman, looking down on the consort of the Lord of the World from the branches of the tree where he sat concealed, spoke to her in melodious and candid tones.

CHAPTER 31

Hanuman praises Rama

HAVING examined the matter from every aspect, that intelligent monkey began to pour sweet words into Vaidehi's ear, saying:—

" There was a king named Dasaratha, the possessor of chariots, horses and elephants, one by nature devout and illustrious, the glory of the Ikshwakus. To harm none was his delight and he was high-minded and compassionate, a true hero of his race that found its splendour and the growth of its prosperity in him. Clad in all the insignia of royalty and majesty, that lion among kings, renowned in the four regions, shed the felicity he enjoyed over all. His beloved eldest son, whose countenance was as bright as the moon, was called Rama, possessor of a keen intellect and the most skilled of archers. Faithful to his vows, the defender of his people, the protector of all beings, upholder of justice, he was the scourge of his foes.

" At the command of his aged sire, his word his bond, that hero accompanied by his consort and his brother was banished to the forest. Whilst giving himself up to the chase in that vast solitude, he slew large numbers of valiant titans who were able to change their form at will.

When Ravana learnt that he had destroyed Janasthana and killed Khara and Dushana, he in fury, bore Janaki away, having lured her lord far into the forest by the aid of Maricha in the form of a deer.

" Whilst searching everywhere to discover the divine and irreproachable Sita, Rama found a friend in the forest, the Monkey Sugriva, Bringing about the destruction of Bali, Rama, the conqueror of hostile cities, conferred the monkey kingdom on the magnanimous Sugriva and by his decree, thousands of monkeys, able to change their form at will, set out to search for that goddess in every region. I am one of those who, at the instance of Sampati, crossed the sea four hundred miles in width, on account of that large-eyed beauty. Hearing of her comeliness, her grace and distinguishing characteristics from Rama, I have been enabled to find her at last."

Having spoken thus, that bull among monkeys fell silent.

And Janaki was extremely astonished, hearing that speech and brushing aside her lovely tangled locks which concealed her face, she looked up into the Shingshapa tree.

Hearing the words of that monkey, Sita glanced enquiringly to the four quarters and other regions, whilst an extreme delight

flooded her whole being as she remembered Rama. Then, glancing from side to side and up and down, she espied the son of Vata, who resembled the rising sun, that minister of the King of the Monkeys of incomparable wisdom.

CHAPTER 32

Sita sees Hanuman

BEHOLDING that monkey of pleasing speech, clad in white raiment, resembling a flash of lightning, crouching concealed among the branches, bright as a cluster of Ashoka flowers and like gold refined in the crucible, Sita was greatly agitated.

Observing that foremost of monkeys of humble mien, Maithili said to herself in extreme surprise: "Ah! What a terrible looking monkey, unacceptable and hideous to behold." Thinking thus, her fears increased and she broke into countless plaintive lamentations. Then the lovely Sita cried out in her terror: "O Rama, O Rama, O Lakshmana!" and the voice of that virtuous princess grew fainter and fainter till, casting her eyes on that excellent monkey once more, who had assumed a reverent attitude, Maithili said to herself: "It must be a dream."

Observing the face of that Indra among Monkeys with its deep scars as has been described and, looking on that excellent ape, the most honourable son of the Wind, the first of the wise, Sita lost consciousness and became like one dead. Thereafter, slowly regaining her senses, she said to herself: "This vision of a monkey is condemned by the scriptures and is an inauspicious dream! Can all be well with Rama, who is accompanied by Lakshmana and my father King Janaka? Yet it can be no dream for, in the grief and misfortune that overwhelms me, I am no longer able to sleep and, far from him whose countenance resembles the full moon, no joy remains for me. Through constantly thinking and calling on Rama, I imagine I hear and see only those things which are related to Rama. For my love is a torment, my whole being flows

towards him, ever absorbed in his rememberance I see and hear him alone. Is it an illusion? This is what perturbs me and makes me uneasy. I deem this to be but a phantom of the mind yet thinking thus, I still behold it, while an imaginary object can never have a form and he who is thus addressing me has a distinct form. Salutations to Vachaspati who is accompanied by the God who bears the Thunderbolt! Salutations to Swyambhu and the God who partakes of offerings! May they grant that the creature who has spoken in my presence, be real and not illusory!"

CHAPTER 33

Hanuman's Converse with the Princess Sita

SLIPPING down from the tree, Hanuman, whose face was the colour of coral, attired in a humble guise, approached Sita and that mighty son of the Wind with joined palms addressed her in gentle tones, saying:

"Who art thou, O Lady, whose eyes resemble lotus petals, who, wearing a soiled silken garment art supporting thyself by the branch of the tree? O Irreproachable One, why are tears of suffering falling from thine eyes, that resemble the lotus, as water flows from a broken vessel? O Fair One, who art thou among the Celestials, Titans, Nagas, Gandharvas, Rakshas, Yakshas and Kinneras? Or do the Rudras claim that thou art born of them or the Wind-gods or the Vasus, O Lady of exquisite features? To me thou appearest to be of divine origin. Art thou Rohini, foremost and most brilliant of stars, who, separated from the moon has fallen from the abode of the immortals? Or art thou the lovely dark-eyed Arundhati, who hath fled in wrath or in pride from her lord, Shri Vasishtha? Is it for a son, a father, a brother or a husband, whose departure from this world thou art mourning, O Lady of slender waist? By thy tears and sighs and thy lying on the earth, it seems to me that thou art not a celestial being and further thou dost ever and again call on the name of a king. From the marks on

thy person I deem thee to be the consort or the daughter of a monarch. Art thou not Sita, who was ruthlessly borne away by Ravana from Janasthana? May prosperity attend thee! From thy wretched plight, thine unrivalled beauty and thine ascetic garb, I deem thee to be Rama's consort."

Hearing Hanuman's words and filled with joy at the sound of Rama's name, Vaidehi answered him, as he stood beneath the tree, saying:

"I am the daughter-in-law of Dasaratha, foremost among the kings of the world, a knower of the Self, the destroyer of hostile armies. I am the daughter of King Janaka, the magnanimous sovereign of Videha and my name is Sita, the consort of the highly intelligent Rama, who is endowed with wisdom. For twelve years I dwelt in Raghava's abode, experiencing every earthly delight and satisfying every desire. In the thirteenth year, the king, with the approval of his ministers, resolved to install Rama, the joy of the House of Ikshwaku on the throne. As they were preparing to anoint Rama as heir-apparent, Queen Kaikeyi addressed her lord, saying:—

"'I will neither eat nor drink of that which is served to me each day but shall put an end to my existence if Rama be installed. Let the boons that, in gratitude, thou didst grant me, be redeemed and let Raghava repair to the forest'.

"The king, faithful to his bond, recollected the boons made to the queen and hearing those cruel and unpleasing words was lost in grief. Then that aged monarch, adhering firmly to his vow, weeping, besought his eldest son to renounce the throne. That illustrious prince to whom the words of his sire were more to be prized than the throne, inwardly assenting, promised to obey. Rama, ever a giver, seeking no return, truthful, never uttering a falsehood even were his life to be made forfeit, is essentially brave. Laying aside his costly attire, the highly glorious Rama with his whole heart, renounced the kingdom and gave me into his mother's keeping, but I, assuming the garb of an ascetic, quickly prepared to accompany him to the forest, for, separated from him, I could not bear to dwell even in the celestial regions. Then the fortunate Saumitri, the enhancer of his friends' delight, donning robes of bark and kusha grass also prepared to follow his

elder brother. In deference to the will of our sovereign, firm in our vows, we entered the dark and unknown forest. While that one of immeasurable effulgence was dwelling in the Dandaka Forest, I, his consort, was carried away by the Titan, Ravana of perverse soul. Two months is the time fixed by him, after which I am to die."

CHAPTER 34

Sita's Uncertainty on seeing Hanuman

HEARING the words of Sita, who was stricken with grief, Hanuman, the foremost among monkeys, in order to reassure her, said :—

" O Divine Vaidehi, by Rama's decree I have come as a messenger to thee; he is safe and enquires as to thy welfare. Rama, the son of Dasaratha, who is versed in the Veda, conversant with the use of the Brahmastra, the foremost of the learned, offers salutations to thee, O Queen! The highly resplendent Lakshmana too, the most powerful and cherished companion of thy lord, in the midst of his burning anxieties, bows before thee and wishes thee well."

Hearing of the welfare of those two lions among men, Sita, trembling with delight, said to Hanuman :—" Verily the wise say that happiness visits a man even if it be at the end of a hundred years."

Thereupon Sita and Hanuman began to converse with delight and mutual confidence. Hearing Sita speak in this wise, Hanuman, the son of Maruta drew nearer to her who had been overwhelmed with grief and, as he did so, she grew apprehensive and reflected :—"Alas! Why have I entered into converse with him? It is Ravana in another guise!" Thereupon, letting go the Ashoka branch, Maithili of faultless limbs, exhausted with suffering, sank down on the earth.

Then that long-armed monkey bowed unto Janaka's daughter, who, filled with terror, did not dare raise her eyes to him, yet,

seeing him bowing humbly before her, Sita, whose face resembled the moon, sighed deeply and said to him in gentle accents :—

"If thou art Ravana's self, who has assumed a perfidious guise in order to increase my distress, it is a vile act. Thou art he, who, renouncing his own shape, appeared to me in Janasthana as a mendicant, O Ranger of the Night. O Thou, wearing shapes at will, it doth not behove thee to torment me, who am distressed and emaciated with fasting.

"Yet thou canst not be he whom I fear, since my heart feels delight in seeing thee. If thou art truly Rama's messenger, may good betide thee! Thou art welcome, O Best of Monkeys for it is sweet to me to hear of Rama. Set forth the virtues of Rama, O Monkey, and ravish my soul, O Gentle One, as the current of a river bears away its banks. O how sweet a dream does an inhabitant of the woods bring to me so long after mine abduction! If I might only see the valiant Raghava accompanied by Lakshmana once more but even a dream denies me this delight. Can it be a dream? To see a monkey in dream does not give rise to happiness yet I am happy now! Is my mind not deranged or has fasting disturbed the humours of my body and caused this delusion or is it perchance a mirage? Nay, it cannot be an hallucination for I am in full possession of my senses and perceive this monkey clearly."

Such were the thoughts that haunted Sita, as also that the titans were able to change their form at will, which convinced her that this was the King of the Titans himself. Having arrived at this conclusion, the daughter of Janaka, of slender waist, ceased to converse with the monkey but Hanuman, divining what was passing through her mind, consoled her with sweet words, enhancing her delight saying:—

"Bright as the sun and like the moon, beloved of all, that sovereign of the world is as munificent as Kuvera. In valour resembling the glorious Vishnu, of sweet and truthful speech like unto Vachaspati, handsome, illustrious and fortunate like the God of Love, the just dispenser of punishment to evil-doers, he is the foremost of car-warriors in the world.

"He in whose arms the whole world takes refuge, that magnanimous Raghava was lured away from the hermitage

by means of Maricha in the form of a deer, thus allowing Ravana to bear thee away. Soon shall that mighty hero destroy Ravana in combat with his fiery shafts discharged in anger. It is he, who has sent me with these tidings. Worn with grief at thy separation, he enquires as to thy welfare, as also the highly resplendent Lakshmana, enhancer of Sumitra's delight, who offers salutations to thee. The king of the monkey hosts, Sugriva by name, who is Rama's friend, also pays homage to thee; Rama, Lakshmana and Sugriva have thee ever in mind; though subject to the titans, by good fortune thou dost still live, O Vaidehi. Ere long thou shalt behold Rama and Lakshmana of the great car with Sugriva of limitless prowess.

"I am Sugriva's minister, the monkey Hanuman, I have entered the city of Lanka, having crossed the ocean, thus setting my foot on the head of Ravana of perverse soul. I have come here to see thee, depending on my own prowess, I am not he whom thou deemest me to be. Do thou renounce thy doubts, and have confidence in my words."

CHAPTER 35

Hanuman makes himself known to Sita

HEARING that lion among monkeys discoursing on Rama, Vaidehi spoke to him in sweet and gentle accents, saying:—

"Where didst thou encounter Rama and how didst thou come to know Lakshmana? How did men and monkeys come to form an alliance? O Monkey, describe the distinctive characteristics of Rama and Lakshmana once again and so dispel my grief. Speak to me of Rama's grace and form, his arms and thighs, as well as Lakshmana's."

To these questions of Vaidehi, Hanuman, born of Maruta, began to give a detailed description of Rama and said:—

"By good fortune, recognising me to be a messenger of Rama, O Vaidehi, whose eyes are as large as lotus petals, thou hast asked me to describe the person of thy lord as well as that

of Lakshmana. O Large-eyed Lady, hear me while I tell thee of those marks of royalty I have observed in the persons of Rama and Lakshmana. O Daughter of Janaka, Rama has eyes like unto lotus petals, his countenance resembles the moon and he is endowed with great beauty and virtue. In radiance like the sun, in patience resembling the earth, in wisdom like unto Brihaspati, in renown equal to Vasava, he is the protector of all beings and the upholder of his race, the guardian of law and tradition and the scourge of his foes. O Lovely One, Rama is the preserver of the people and the four castes, he inaugurates and establishes the social order, he is worshipped by all like the sun and is an observer of pious vows; he knows well the proper time to pay honour to holy men and is conversant with the path of right action.

" Born with royal prerogatives, the servant of the brahmins, learned, endowed with nobility, humble, he is the scourge of his foes. Versed in the Yajur Veda, honoured by those conversant with the Vedas, he is proficient in archery and possesses a thorough knowledge of the Vedas and Vedangas. Broad shouldered, long-armed, handsome, possessing a conch-shaped neck his ribs are well covered and muscular and his eyes are red; such is Rama renowned among men. The tone of his voice resembles the Dundubhi, his skin is smooth, his three limbs, thigh, fist and wrist are hard, and the others, long, his navel, abdomen and breast are well-proportioned and high. The rims of his eyes, his nails and palms are red, his voice and gait grave; there are three folds in the skin of his body and neck; the lines on the soles of his feet and breast are deep; his neck, back and thighs are muscular; his hair is coiled in three circles; his thumb is marked with four lines indicating his deep knowledge of the Vedas; there are four lines on his forehead, the sign of a long life; he is four cubits in height; his arms, thighs and cheeks are plump; wrists, knee-joints, hips, hands and feet are well-proportioned, his four front teeth have auspicious marks; his gait is like a lion's, a tiger's, an elephant's or a bull's; his lips and jaws are fleshy, his nose long, his face, speech, down and skin, cool; his two arms, little fingers, thighs and legs, slender; his countenance, eyes, mouth, tongue, lips, palate, breast,

nails and feet resemble lotuses; his forehead, neck, arms, navel, feet, back and ears are ample. He is gifted with grace, renown, and radiance; his lineage is pure on both sides; his armpits, abdomen, breast, nose, shoulders and forehead are elevated; his fingers, hair, down, nails, skin, eyesight and intellect, clear and sharp. Raghava delights in what is just and true, he is filled with energy and is well able to judge how to act under all circumstances; he is benevolent to all.

"His brother Saumitri, whose mother is second in rank among the queens, whose glory is immeasurable, resembles him in beauty, devotion and good qualities; he is of a golden complexion whereas Rama is dark of hue. Those two tigers among men, who yearn to see thee once more, scouring the earth for thee, met with us in the forest. Ranging the earth in search of thee they beheld the King of the Monkeys, who had been banished by his elder brother, at the foot of the Rishyamuka Mountain that is covered by innumerable trees. We were in attendance on the handsome Sugriva, Lord of the Monkeys, who had been driven from the kingdom by his elder brother and, beholding those foremost of men, clad in bark, bearing splendid bows in their hands, that monkey fled to the summit of the mountain, distracted with terror. Thereafter he sent me out to meet them in all haste and, at Sugriva's command, I approached those two princes, those lions among men, with joined palms.

"Distinguished by their handsome features, those two heroes, being informed of what had taken place, were well pleased and I, placing them on my shoulders, transported them to the crest of the hill where the magnanimous Sugriva was to be found. There I related all to Sugriva and they conversed together and a great friendship grew up between those illustrious persons, the King of the Monkeys, and those monarchs among men. Then they comforted each other, narrating their respective misfortunes and Lakshmana's elder brother consoled Sugriva who had been banished by Bali of great prowess on account of the love of a woman. Thereafter, Lakshmana related the suffering and loss that had befallen Rama to Sugriva, who, hearing this recital from his lips, was bereft of his radiance like the sun under eclipse. Then

gathering together all the ornaments that thou didst let fall on the earth when the Titan bore thee away, the monkeys brought them to Rama with delight, but they were ignorant of where thou wert.

" All those ornaments which had fallen tinkling to the ground, and had been collected by me, I gave over to Rama, who was beside himself with grief and, clasping them to his breast, that God of divine beauty, the son of Dasaratha, inflamed with grief, with many groans bewailed his loss. For a long time that magnanimous hero lay crushed under the weight of his affliction and I addressed many words of comfort to him, persuading him to rise. Whereupon Rama with Saumitri, gazing again and again on those precious objects, gave them over to Sugriva. In thine absence, O Noble Lady, Raghava is consumed with grief, like a volcano burning with perpetual fire. On account of thee, sleeplessness, sorrow and care consume the magnanimous Rama, as the sacred fires burn down a temple in which they are enclosed. The pain of thy separation has shattered him as a violent earthquake shatters a great mountain. O Daughter of a King, he wanders among the enchanting woods, on river banks and by the side of waterfalls but nowhere finds delight. O Daughter of Janaka, ere long, Ramachandra will undoubtedly bring about the destruction of Ravana with all his kith and kin, and that foremost of men will soon liberate thee.

" It was thus that Rama and Sugriva entered into a friendly alliance to encompass Bali's destruction and institute a search for thee. Thereupon, returning to Kishkindha with those two heroic princes, that lord of monkeys slew Bali in battle and having struck him down by his prowess in fight, Rama made Sugriva king of all the monkeys and bears. Such was the alliance between Rama and Sugriva, O Goddess, know then that I am Hanuman who have come as their deputy. When he had recovered his kingdom, Sugriva, gathering all the great and powerful monkeys together, sent them forth to every region to seek for thee. Under the commands of their king, Sugriva, those mighty monkeys, equal to the Indra of Mountains, scoured the land on every side. Since that time, in fear of Sugriva, those monkeys have been exploring the whole

earth ; I am one of those. The mighty and illustrious son of Bali, Angada by name, set out with a third part of the army under him ; many were the days and nights we spent overwhelmed with distress, having lost our way on the foremost of mountains, Vindhya. Despairing of accomplishing our purpose and the time appointed having passed, in fear of that lord of the monkeys, we resolved to give up our lives. Having searched the mountains and the inaccessible fastnesses, the rivers and waterfalls without finding any trace of thee, we made up our minds to die. Thereafter we began our final fast on the summit of the mountain.

" Submerged in an ocean of grief, Angada lamented unceasingly, reflecting on thine abduction, O Vaidehi, on the death of Bali, on our resolution to die of hunger and on the death of Jatayu. Whilst we were fasting thus, waiting for death, having given up all hope of carrying out the behests of our lord, to the good fortune of our enterprise, there appeared, a mighty vulture, the brother of Jatayu, by name Sampati. Hearing of his brother's death, he cried out in anger :—

" ' By whom was my younger brother slain and where does he dwell ? I wish to hear this from you, O Excellent Monkeys ! '

" Thereupon, Angada related all in detail to him and how that Titan of terrible form destroyed Jatayu on thine account in Janasthana. In his grief for Jatayu's death, that son of Aruna told us that thou wast to be found in Ravana's abode, O Exquisite Damsel !

" Hearing the words of Sampati, our joy was extreme and led by him we all rose up and, leaving the Vindhya Mountain came to the shores of the sea. There a cruel anxiety seized the monkeys anew, eager as they were to find thee, but I was able to dispel that sharp anguish of the monkey host, who beholding the main had lost heart. Then, removing their fear I leapt a hundred leagues over the sea and entered Lanka by night, which was filled with titans; there I beheld Ravana and saw thee overcome with grief, O Irreproachable Lady !

" Now I have told thee all, do thou, in thy turn speak to me, O Goddess ! I am the messenger of the son of Dasaratha and have come here to thee, to carry out Rama's purpose. Know me to be Sugriva's minister and the Wind-god's son ! All

is well with thy lord, Kakutstha, the foremost of those bearing weapons, as also with Lakshmana possessed of auspicious marks and ever engaged in the worship of his superiors and the well-being of his lord.

"I have come here at Sugriva's command and have accomplished the journey alone. Changing my form at will, I have scoured the southern region and, in my eagerness to find thee, have sought thee on every side. With tidings of thee, I shall by divine grace be able to dispel the grief of the monkey host, who have been lamenting on thy account and my crossing the ocean will not have been in vain. I shall win renown for having found thee, O Goddess and the highly powerful Raghava will rejoin thee without delay, having first slain Ravana, the king of the Titans with his sons and relatives.

"Mount Malyavat is the highest of mountains, O Vaidehi, and there dwells my sire, Kesarin. Obedient to the will of the divine Sages, he once repaired to Gokarna and at that sacred spot belonging to the Lord of the Rivers, brought about the destruction of the Titan, Samvasadana. I was born of the consort of Kesarin, O Maithili and my name is Hanuman; I am known throughout the world for my exploits. To inspire thee with confidence, I have described the virtues of thy lord. Ere long, O Goddess, Raghava will certainly take thee hence."

Reassured by the proofs given to her, Sita, exhausted by suffering, recognised Hanuman to be Rama's messenger.

Then Janaki, in an excess of joy, allowed tears of felicity to fall from her eyes fringed with dark lashes. The gentle countenance of that large-eyed damsel with her reddened eyes shone like the moon released from Rahu's hold.

Taking him for a real monkey at last, she reflected in herself: "How could it be otherwise?"

Then Hanuman again addressed that lady of charming mien, saying:—

"I have told thee all, now have confidence in me, O Maithili! What more can I do for thee and what is thy pleasure, ere I return? When the Asura, Samvasadana was destroyed in combat by the foremost of monkeys at the behest of the celestial sages, I was born of Vayu, O Maithili, and though a monkey, I am his equal in prowess!"

CHAPTER 36

Sita questions Hanuman

The exceedingly mighty son of Pavana, Hanuman, in order to increase Sita's confidence in him, again addressed her in reassuring words, saying :—

" O Fortunate One, I am a monkey, the messenger of the sagacious Rama ; behold this precious ring on which his name is engraved ! O Goddess, it was given to me by that magnanimous hero so that thou shouldst have faith in me. Take heart therefore, may good betide thee ! Soon shall there be an end to thy grief ! "

Then Janaki, taking the jewel that had adorned the finger of her lord, was overcome with joy, as if he himself were present. Her gentle countenance with its large eyes began to sparkle with delight resembling the moon released from Rahu's hold. Blushing with pleasure on receiving this token from her lord, that youthful woman, in her satisfaction, began to look on that great monkey as on a friend and paid tribute to him in the following wise :—

" O Foremost of Monkeys, verily thou who have entered this city of Ravana's alone, art full of courage, valour and address. With admirable tenacity thou hast traversed the ocean, four hundred miles in breadth, the abode of great monsters, reducing it to the measure of a cow's hoof. I do not look on thee as an ordinary monkey, O Lion among Forest Dwellers, since thou dost not stand in awe of Ravana. O Best of Monkeys, thou hast merited associationship with me, since Rama the knower of Self has dispatched thee as his messenger. It is certain that the invincible Rama would never have sent thee to me without first testing thy prowess. By good fortune the virtuous and truthful Rama as also the illustrious Lakshmana, enhancer of Sumitra's delight, are well, yet if Kakutstha live untouched by ill, how is it that he does not burn up the

earth encircled by the sea in his wrath like the fires at the dissolution of the worlds? Those two heroes are able to subdue the Gods themselves and yet they refrain from action; I deem therefore that my sufferings are still not at an end! Is Rama not disquieted; is he not torn with anxiety on my account? Is that son of a king making every preparation to deliver me? Is he sorrowful and pre-occupied? Has he lost sight of his ultimate purpose; is he fulfilling his duty with fortitude? Is that slayer of his foes, desirous of victory, propitiating his friends with forbearance and gifts and employing the threefold means of dealing with his enemies? Does he show goodwill to his friends and have they confidence in him? Does he ally himself with those of good repute and do they pay him honour? Does that son of a king seek the favour of the Gods; does he depend on them for his power and fortune? Has Rama's affection for me decreased as a result of my living far from him? Will he deliver me from this peril? Is he not unstrung by this extreme misfortune, being accustomed to felicity and unused to adversity? Has he received frequent good tidings of Kaushalya, Sumitra and also Bharata? Is not Raghava, worthy of honour, overcome with grief at my absence? Is he reflecting on how he may rescue me? Will not Bharata, ever devoted to his brother, send out a great army led by experienced generals for my sake? O Foremost of Monkeys, will not the King of the Monkeys, the fortunate Sugriva, come to mine aid at the head of a host of valiant monkeys using their teeth and nails? Will not the heroic Lakshmana, the increaser of Sumitra's delight, skilled in the use of weapons, destroy the titans with his shafts? Shall I not see Rama strike down Ravana on the battlefield ere long with his friends and kinsfolk by means of Rudra's weapon? Is the golden countenance of Raghava, fragrant with the scent of lotuses, not dimmed under adversity, like a lotus deprived of water under the burning sun? Does he still retain his fixity of purpose, he who, for the sake of righteousness, without regret renounced the throne and on foot entered the forest with me? Neither for his mother nor his father nor for any other does he bear the love that he cherishes for me. I shall only live as long as I hear of him."

Having addressed these words, full of meaning and sweetness to that monkey, that charming lady became silent so that she might hear more of her lord.

And listening to Sita, Maruti, of immeasurable prowess, with joined palms paid obeisance to her and spoke again, saying:

" O Illustrious Princess, the lotus-eyed Rama does not know that thou art here and for this reason has not delivered thee as Purandara rescued Sachi. Learning this from me, Raghava will instantly come hither with his great army of bears and monkeys and, having triumphed over the invincible ocean, the abode of Varuna with his terrible shafts, Kakutstha will rid the city of Lanka of all the titans. Even if death himself or the Gods or the mighty titans seek to bar his passage, he will destroy them all. O Princess, in thine absence, Rama stricken with grief is no longer able to find rest, like an elephant who is attacked by a lion. O Goddess, I swear to thee by the Mandara, Malava, Vindhya, Meru and Dardura Mountains and all the fruits and roots, that thou shalt soon behold Rama's lovely countenance with his beautiful eyes, lips like unto the Bimba fruit, and charming earrings, who resembles the risen moon. Soon thou shalt see Rama on Mount Prasravana, O Vaidehi, like Shatakratu seated on Airavata. Eschewing flesh and wine, Rama subsists on the fruits and roots of the forest alone, carefully prepared by Lakshmana of which he partakes at the fifth period of the day. So absorbed is he in the thought of thee that he no longer drives away flies, insects and worms from his body. Sunk in his reflection, lost in grief, he is wholly absorbed in thy contemplation. Rama, the foremost among men no longer sleeps but should his eyelids close in weariness he starts up crying: 'O Sita!' in gentle accents. Whenever he beholds a fruit or flower or any other object dear to women, he sighs 'O My dear Love!'. O Goddess, that prince unceasingly calls on thee, crying: 'O Sita', and in order find to thee has resorted to every means."

Hearing Rama's praises, Sita was greatly delighted, but grieved also to learn of his pain so that she resembled the autumn moon entering a dark cloud to re-appear once more.

CHAPTER 37

Sita refuses to be rescued by Hanuman

THE moon-faced Sita, hearing this speech, addressed Hanuman in words, fraught with piety and sound judgment:—

" O Monkey, thou hast revealed to me that Rama is wholly pre-occupied with my remembrance and also that he is plunged in grief, which is as nectar mingled with poison. Whether man be at the height of his power or in the abyss of sorrow, death draws him as with a cord. Living beings are unable to escape their destiny, O Excellent Monkey, behold how I, Rama and Saumitri are sunk in misery! As a wreck floating on the waters seeks to reach the shore, so does Raghava seek to come to the end of his woes.

" After destroying the titans, slaying Ravana and laying Lanka waste, will not my lord see me once again? Do thou tell him to hasten, for at the end of this year I must die. This is the tenth month and two alone remain, that is the term fixed for me by that evil wretch, Ravana. His brother Bibishana made great entreaty to him to restore me, but he paid no heed to his proposals. Ravana does not look with favour on my release for death lies in wait for him, driven on, as he is, by fate. O Warrior, on her mother's request, Kala, Bibishana's eldest daughter told me of this. There is an old and trusty titan, named Avindha, full of wisdom, virtue, intelligence and nobility, highly revered by Ravana, who prophesied the imminent destruction of the titans by Rama, but that perverse wretch disregarded his salutory words. O Best of Monkeys, I still hope that my lord will soon be re-united with me, for my heart is pure and Rama's virtues are infinite. He is endowed with endurance, courage, compassion, gratitude, energy and strength, O Monkey. What foe would not tremble before him, who slew fourteen thousand demons in Janasthana without his brother's aid? That lion among men cannot be surpassed by the titan warriors; I am conversant with his powers as

Sachi is with Indra's. O Monkey, that sun, Rama, with his innumerable arrows as his rays. will dry up the lake of hostile titans ! "

Speaking thus, Sita, overwhelmed with grief at the thought of Rama, her face bathed in tears, was again addressed by Hanuman, who said to her :—

" No sooner shall I have spoken to Raghava, than he will hasten hither at the head of a powerful army composed of bears and monkeys or shall I deliver thee this very day from the grasp of those titans and these present afflictions ? Do thou climb upon my back, O Irreproachable Lady, and bearing thee on my shoulders, I will cross over the sea ; verily I am able to carry away the City of Lanka together with Ravana himself. This day, as Anila bears the sacrificial offerings unto Shakra, I shall bring thee back to Raghava on the Prasravana Mountain, O Maithili ! To-day thou shalt behold Rama, who is accompanied by Lakshmana, preparing to destroy the enemy, as Vishnu engaged in the destruction of the Daityas and thou shalt see that mighty hero, eager to behold thee, on that solitary mountain, resembling Purandara on the head of the King of the Serpents.

" O Lovely Goddess, mount on my shoulders, do not hesitate and be united with Rama, as Rohini is restored to Shashanka, as Sachi to Indra, or Savarshala to the Sun. I shall cross the ocean by the aerial path ! O Fair One, bearing thee away from here, none of the dwellers in Lanka will be able to follow me. I shall return as I came, O Vaidehi, bearing thee through space."

Hearing these astonishing words, Maithili, trembling with joy, said to Hanuman : " How canst thou hope to carry me so great a distance, O Hanuman ? This demonstrates thy monkey nature ! How dost thou deem it possible that thy little body should convey me from here to my lord, that king among men, O Monkey ? "

At these words Hanuman reflected : " This is the first affront I have suffered ! Vaidehi is unaware of my prowess and strength. She shall learn that I am able to assume any shape at will ! " Thinking thus, that foremost of monkeys, Hanuman, the scourge of his foes, showed himself to Sita in his true form.

In order to inspire Sita with confidence, leaping down from the tree, that monkey began to expand in size and grew equal to the Meru or Mandara Mountain or a flaming brazier and that lion among monkeys, of a coppery countenance, his body like a mountain, with nails and teeth like diamonds, standing before Sita, said :—

"I am capable of uprooting Lanka with its hills, woods, fields, palaces, ramparts and gates and its monarch also! Take heart therefore O Queen, do not delay further, O Vaidehi! Come and dispel the grief of Raghava as also Lakshmana's."

Seeing the son of the Wind-god grow to the size of a mountain, the daughter of Janaka, whose eyes resembled lotus petals, said to him :—

"O Mighty Monkey, now I recognise the extent of thy powers and thy speed which equals the wind, also thy radiance like unto fire. How should an ordinary monkey have reached this land beyond the infinite ocean ? I know that thou art able to take me from here and bear me away, but, O Foremost of Monkeys, I must consider if the consequences are to mine advantage. Furthermore, is it fitting for me to go with thee ? Thy speed equal to the wind may render me giddy and I might fall from thy back whilst thou wert proceeding high over the ocean. Flung into the sea filled with sharks, crocodiles and giant fish, I should certainly become the chosen prey of those monsters. Nay, I cannot go with thee, O Destroyer of Thy Foes and for thee undoubtedly there is also grave danger. When the titans see thee bearing me away, they will pursue thee at the wicked Ravana's command and, surrounded by those warriors furnished with spears and maces, carrying a woman, thou wilt be beset with peril, O Hero! Fully armed, in great numbers, those titans would pursue thee, who art unarmed ; how couldst thou then resist them and protect me ? And when thou art engaged in combat with those terrible demons, O Foremost of Monkeys, I, stricken with fear, will slip from thy back. Those terrible, huge and powerful titans would then end by overcoming thee in the conflict, O Excellent Monkey. Or turning my head, whilst thou art engaged in fight, I should fall and those wicked titans would bear me away and bring me hither or, wresting me from thy grasp,

tear me to pieces. Victory or defeat is uncertain in combat! If I died under the threats of the titans, O First of the Monkeys, all thine efforts to deliver me will have been in vain. Though thou art well able to destroy all the titans, Rama's fame would thereby suffer decrease or the titans, bearing me away, would confine me in a secret place unknown to the monkeys or to Rama. Then, all thine efforts to rescue me will have been fruitless, but if Rama returns with thee, great will be the chances of success.

"O Great-armed Warrior, the lives of Raghava, of his two brothers and of King Sugriva depend on me. Having given up hope of delivering me, worn out with grief and anxiety, those two brothers with all the bears and monkeys would end their existence. O Monkey, furthermore, being wholly devoted to my lord, I am unable to touch the body of any save Rama. When I was forced into contact with Ravana's limbs, I was helpless and without a defender and was no longer in control of my person. If Rama comes to destroy Ravana and the titans and takes me away from here, it will be a feat worthy of him! I have heard of that hero's great exploits and have myself witnessed them, nor can Devas, Nagas nor titans equal Rama on the field of battle!

"Who, having beheld him in combat, wielding his marvellous bow, endowed with a valour and strength like unto Indra's, could withstand Rama who is accompanied by Lakshmana and who resembles a fire fanned by the wind? O Foremost of Monkeys, who would seek to oppose Rama, accompanied by Lakshmana, resembling elephants intoxicated with Mada juice, showering shafts like the rays of the sun at the time of the dissolution of the worlds? O Best of Monkeys, do thou bring my dear one and Lakshmana with the Lord of the Monkey Hosts, here with all speed. On account of separation from Rama, I have long been consumed with grief, now, O Valiant Monkey, make me happy once more."

CHAPTER 38

She gives Hanuman her Jewel

HIGHLY gratified by Sita's words, that lion among monkeys answered thus :—

"O Fair Lady of auspicious presence, thou hast spoken in accord with thy feminine nature and with the modesty of one devoted to her lord ! As a woman, it would not be possible for thee to cross the sea, four hundred miles in width on my back and the plea that thou hast made, saying 'I may not touch the body of any save Rama' is worthy of thee, O Goddess, consort of that magnanimous One. Who but thou would utter such words, O Janaki ? Truly Kakutstha shall hear from beginning to end all thou hast said and done in my presence, O Princess. For many reasons did I speak to thee thus, O Lady, anxious as I was to compass Rama's design, and my heart troubled with feelings of affection. Further it was with great difficulty that I penetrated into the City of Lanka and traversed the ocean and debating what was meet for me to do, I addressed thee in this wise. I wished to bring thee back to the one who is the delight of the House of Raghu this day ! It was my devotion for him and in regard for thee, that I uttered those words. As, however, thou art unable to come with me, O Irreproachable Lady, do thou give me some token which will inspire Rama with faith in me."

Being thus addressed by Hanuman, Sita, who resembled the daughter of the Gods, answered him in faint accents, her voice broken with sobs :—"This is the most perfect token thou canst take to my dear lord ! Do thou say this to him :—'O Rama, when we formerly resided at the foot of the Chittrakuta Mountain in the eastern region, not far distant from where the ascetics dwelt, in a place rich in roots, fruit and water near the river Mandakini, whilst ranging the flowery groves, redolent with fragrance, thou, having sported in the lake, rested all dripping on my breast. At that moment a

crow, approaching, sought to peck me and I threw a stone at it; nevertheless that ferocious devourer of offerings, determined to wound me, would not leave its prey and in my wrath I removed my girdle, in order to strike the bird and my robe slipped down. On seeing this, thou didst laugh at me, whereat I blushed with shame and indignation. Harassed by that crow, who was wild with hunger, I took refuge with thee, and exhausted, threw myself into thine arms as thou wert seated there. Though I was still vexed, thou didst pacify me by thy laughter and my face being bathed in tears, gently dried my eyes; thus I was seen by thee, greatly enraged by the crow, O Lord. Exhausted, O Rama, I slept for a long time on thy breast, and thou in thy turn, didst sleep on mine, O Elder Brother of Bharata. Then, as I awoke, that crow approached me once more and, as I rose from thine arms, tore my breast with its beak, O Raghava. Thereupon, at the shedding of blood, thou didst wake and beholding my breast lacerated, O Long-armed Hero, highly incensed and hissing like a serpent, thou didst speak thus:—

"O Thou, whose thighs resemble the trunk of an elephant, who has wounded thy breast? Who seeks to play with an angry five-headed serpent?"

"Thereafter, looking round, thou didst perceive that crow, who, with sharp and bloody talons stood before me. That bird, prince of winged creatures, was the son of Indra and with the swiftness of the wind, it disappeared into the earth. Then thou, O Long-armed Warrior, thine eyes rolling in fury, resolved to destroy that crow and, plucking a blade of kusha grass, from where thou hadst lain, transformed it into Brahma's shaft and it burst into flame, like unto the fire of death before the bird. Hurling that fiery brand, it followed that bird high into the sky and, pursued by the fiery dart, the crow flew this way and that, thus traversing many regions and ranging through the Three Worlds, repulsed by his sire and the sages; at last it sought refuge with thee, falling on the earth and beseeching mercy of thee. Though worthy of death, thou, O Kakutstha, ever willing to succour all beings, out of compassion, spared him. Then, speaking unto the one who was exhausted and distressed, thou didst say:—"This weapon of

Brahma may never remain ineffective, therefore say what is now to be done?" Then the crow answered:—"I will give up my right eye," whereupon Ramachandra destroyed the right eye of that crow. Having sacrificed the right eye, his life was spared and, paying obeisance to Rama, as also to King Dasaratha, the crow, delivered by that warrior, returned to his abode. O Thou, who, on my behalf, didst discharge the Brahma-weapon, even at a crow, why dost thou leave him who bore me away, unpunished? O Foremost of Men, show thy compassion to me and inspire me with hope. I am conversant with thy great energy, thine immense endurance, thine amazing strength, thine irresistible power unfettered by the limitations of time and space, incapable of being disturbed, thou who art deep like the ocean, lord of the earth and the equal of Vasava himself! Thou, the first among bowmen, who art full of ardour, and courage, wherefore dost thou not direct thy weapons against the titans? Neither Nagas, Gandharvas, Gods nor Maruts can resist thee in combat'.

"If that warrior still retains any regard for me, why does he not exterminate the titans with his whetted shafts, or why does not Lakshmana, the repressor of his foes, endowed with energy, deliver me at his brother's behest? Since those two tigers among men, equal to Vayu and Indra are invincible even against the Celestials, why do they disregard me?

"Alas! I must be guilty of some heinous sin, since those twin scourges of their foes, though able to do so, fail to come to my rescue!"

Hearing Vaidehi's piteous words, uttered with her eyes full of tears, the mighty Hanuman, foremost of the monkeys, said:—"O Exalted One, I swear to thee that Rama's features are altered on account of the sorrow he feels for thee and, seeing his brother overwhelmed with grief, Lakshmana too is filled with distress, this is the truth, O Goddess. Since I have now found thee, there is no cause to lament further and thou shalt soon see an end to thy woes, O Lovely One. Those two tigers among men, those princes of incalculable energy, in their eagerness to see thee, will burn the worlds to ashes. Having slain that formidable warrior, Ravana with his kinsfolk, Raghava shall return with thee to the palace.

"Now tell me what I shall say to Rama and Lakshmana, who are filled with valour and the illustrious Sugriva and all the assembled monkeys?"

Hanuman having uttered these words, Sita answered him saying:—

"Bowing low to that Lord of the World, enquire after the welfare of that protector of men, whom Kaushalya has brought forth and wish him all prosperity from me. Then offer salutations to the one of whom Sumitra is the happy mother, he, who renounced garlands, jewels, his beloved consort, the dominion of a vast realm hard to attain and his father and mother, after bidding them a tender farewell, in order to follow Rama. That virtuous prince, who, in his devotion, sacrificed unsurpassed felicity, accompanied his brother Kakutstha to the forest, watching over him; he who is great, wise and pleasing to look upon, possessing broad shoulders and who looks on Rama as his father and reverences me as his mother, that valiant Lakshmana, who did not know that I was being borne away. Full of deference for the aged, dignified and brave, measured in speech, the foremost of those dear unto that king's son and worthy of his father-in-law, he who even undertaketh these tasks to which he is not equal, whose presence causes Rama to forget his sire, who is dearer to him than I; Lakshmana, the brother of Rama, to him do thou offer obeisance from me and repeat my words to him. May that noble and virtuous one, beloved of Rama, ever mild and pure, bring an end to my sufferings, O Best of Monkeys! O Chief of the Monkeys, do thou bring about the success of this undertaking. May Rama, on thine instigation, make a supreme effort on my behalf. Further, do thou repeat these words of mine again and again to him:—

"'I have but one month to live, O Son of Dasaratha! After that month I shall die; I swear to thee that this is the truth I speak! Deliver me from the hands of that cruel and wicked Ravana, O Hero, as Kaushiki was delivered from hell'."

Saying this, Sita drew from her robe the pearl which formerly adorned her forehead, which shone with celestial radiance, and bestowing it on Hanuman, said: "Give this to Raghava."

Then the valiant Hanuman, taking the priceless jewel, placed it on his finger, it being too small for his arm and, that foremost of monkeys, having received the pearl, paid obeisance to Sita, circumambulating her from left to right. Filled with delight on having found the princess, Hanuman had already returned to Rama and Lakshmana in thought.

And taking that costly and superb ornament that the daughter of King Janaka had carried carefully concealed in her sari, Hanuman, as if delivered from a hurricane that had overtaken him on a high mountain, his heart full of serenity, once more prepared to set out on his return journey.

CHAPTER 39

Hanuman calms Sita's Fears

HAVING given the jewel to Hanuman, Sita said to him :—

" This token is well known to Raghava and seeing this pearl, the valiant Rama will call three people to mind, my mother, myself and King Dasaratha. O Best of Monkeys, thy heroism being further stimulated by this enterprise, consider carefully what fresh efforts are needed ; thou art capable of undertaking this task, think therefore what course Rama should adopt to bring my misfortunes to an end. O Hanuman seek by thine exertions to terminate my sufferings ! "

Thereupon the son of the Wind-god of immense energy, replied : " So be it," and making obeisance to Vaidehi, prepared to depart, but that exalted one, Videha's daughter, seeing Hanuman about to leave, her voice strangled with sobs, said unto him :—

" O Hanuman, do thou communicate my desires for the happiness of Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva, his ministers and all the other monkeys and, O Best of Monkeys, in consonance with righteousness, wish them well. It behoveth thee to do that which will cause the long-armed Rama to deliver me from the ocean of affliction in which I am plunged. O Hanuman, do thou speak so that the illustrious Rama rescue

me from here while I am yet alive and thereby reap the fruits of virtue. Listening to that which thou shalt relate to him of me, that son of Dasaratha, ever filled with valour, will feel his daring increased a hundredfold in the thought of reunion with me. The heroic Rama, hearing the appeal I have charged thee to deliver to him will be inspired to display increasing prowess."

Listening to Sita's words, Hanuman, born of Maruta, with joined palms, made answer to her saying:—

"Soon shall Kakutstha, surrounded by the foremost monkeys and bears, come, and vanquishing his enemies in fight, dispel thy grief. I know of none among mortals, titans or Gods, who can withstand him when he discharges his arrows. Wert thou the price of victory, he would be able to challenge the Sun or Parjanya or Vaivasvata or Yama himself in conflict and would prepare to conquer the whole earth that is bounded by the sea, O Delight of Janaka."

Hearing these pleasing, true and sweetly expressed words, Janaki addressed Hanuman with respect, who had spoken out of devotion to his master, and said:—"O Hero, if thou judgest it to be wise, then tarry here for one day more and, having rested in some hidden spot, set out to-morrow! Thy presence, O Monkey, will cause me to forget my great misfortune awhile, I who have experienced so little happiness. But shouldst thou depart to-day, O Lion among Monkeys, my life will be in danger till thy return, this is certain. Furthermore, not seeing thee will prove an increased torment, afflicted as I am with grief and, O Hero, this doubt haunts me continually,—'How will that powerful King, in the midst of the forces of his monkeys and bears and those two sons of a monarch, cross the impassable ocean?' In all the worlds, three beings alone have the power to traverse the sea; Garuda, thou and Maruta! In the face of this insurmountable obstacle, what means to success canst thou see, O Most Skilled of Beings? Undoubtedly thou art able to encompass this undertaking unaided, O Destroyer of Hostile Warriors but thou alone wouldst then reap the glory. If Rama, however, together with his armies vanquished Ravana and, delivering me, returned to his own city, that exploit would be worthy

of him. If, crossing the sea and besieging Lanka, that destroyer of hostile forces Kakutstha, bore me hence, he would have accomplished what is natural to him. Do thou therefore act in such wise that that valiant warrior may be able to manifest his prowess!"

Hearing these words, fraught with sense and reason, full of affection, Hanuman replied mildly:—

"O Queen, the leader of the forces of bears and monkeys, Sugriva, full of energy, has resolved to liberate thee. Surrounded by millions of monkeys, that destroyer of titans will come hither without delay. There are, under his command, monkeys endowed with valour, energy and extreme prowess, swift as thought, able to go upward or downward and to every side, nothing can impede their course, no task, however hard, defeats their immeasurable courage. Nay, more than once, by their amazing endurance, they have encircled the entire earth with its seas and mountains on every side, by resorting to the wind's path. Among those Rangers of the Woods, some are equal to me and some superior and, in the whole of Sugriva's company, there is none who is less so. Since I have reached this place, how much more are those valiant monkeys able to do so! Nor are the superior ones sent on errands but those of less account. O Queen, have no anxiety and abandon thy grief; with a single bound, those foremost of monkeys will reach Lanka and those two brothers, resembling the sun and moon about to rise, will speed to thy side, riding on my back. Having slain Ravana and his hordes, Raghava, the delight of the House of Raghu, will take hold of thee, O Lady of Lovely Limbs, in order to bring thee back to thine own city. Therefore let courage and happiness attend thee, have faith in the dawning of that hour; ere long, thou shalt behold Rama shining like a flame.

"That Indra of the Titans, his sons, counsellors and kinsfolk, being slain, thou shalt be re-united with Rama as Shashanka with Rohini. Soon thou shalt see the end of thy woes, O Divine Maithili, and Ravana will fall under Rama's blows before thine eyes!"

Having thus sought to comfort Videha's daughter, Hanuman, born of Maruta, preparing to depart, spoke yet again, saying:—

" Thou shalt soon behold the destroyer of his foes, Raghava of subdued soul, as also Lakshmana, bearing his bow in his hand at the gates of Lanka. Ere long thou shalt see those valiant monkeys, endowed with the courage of lions and tigers, resembling the lord of elephants, fighting with their nails and teeth. O Noble One, innumerable companies of monkeys will be seen by thee, resembling hills or clouds, roaring on the plateaus of Malaya and Lanka. Like an elephant attacked by a lion, Rama is deeply wounded by the formidable shafts of the God of Love ! O Goddess, weep no more, but banish fear and sorrow from thy heart ; thou shalt be reunited with thy consort, O Beautiful One, as Sachi was to Indra.

" Who can overcome Rama ? Who is equal to Saumitri ? Those two brothers, resembling the wind and fire, are thy support. O Goddess, thou shalt not have to dwell long in this place inhabited by formidable titans ; thy beloved will not delay his coming ; have patience till I return ! "

CHAPTER 40

He takes leave of Sita

HEARING the words of that magnanimous son of Vayu, Sita, who resembled a daughter of the Gods, replied in significant words, saying :—

" As the rain, ripening the grain, rejoiceth the earth, so am I gladdened on seeing thee, O Monkey, who speaketh sweetly of my beloved. In compassion for me, who am emaciated with suffering, do that which will enable me to meet with that tiger among men, soon. O Foremost of Monkeys, call to his remembrance, that reed the crow destroyed in his anger, having been deprived of an eye and also how, when my tilaka mark was effaced, he painted another on my cheek, which he will surely remember. Say : ' O Thou who resemblest Indra, how, with thy valour, canst thou suffer Sita to be borne away and set in the midst of the titans ? That celestial pearl which

adorned my forehead, I have preserved with care. In my misfortunes, I have oft looked on it with delight as on thyself, O Irreproachable Hero! Yielding up this jewel, I shall not live long, being overwhelmed with grief. For thy sake, O Rama, I endure insufferable misery and the menaces of the titans which cleave my heart! O Destroyer of thy Foes, I shall live for one more month, after which, bereft of thee, I shall yield up my life. The King of the Titans is a source of dread to me; if I learn that thou dost hesitate in coming to mine aid, I shall instantly give up my life'."

Witnessing Vaidehi's tears and lamentations, the mighty Hanuman, born of Maruta, answered:—

"O Goddess, thy misfortunes have rendered Rama's features wan, I swear to thee this is the truth and seeing Rama overcome with sorrow, Lakshmana too is deeply distressed. Now that I have found thee, there is no cause for despair! Soon, soon, thou shalt see an end to thy woes, O Lovely Princess! Those blameless princes, foremost of men, eager to see thee, will reduce Lanka to ashes. Having slain Ravana in combat, those two scions of the House of Raghu will take thee back to their own city, O Large-eyed Lady! O Irreproachable Damsel, it is now for thee to give me such a token, that Rama will instantly recognise and that will delight his heart."

Sita answered:—"I have already furnished thee with an excellent token. Seeing that jewel, Rama will instantly believe thy words."

Receiving the marvellous pearl, the Prince of the Monkeys inclined his head to that exalted one and prepared to depart.

Beholding that foremost of monkeys expanding his form and, charged with energy, preparing to leap, her face bathed in tears, in a voice choked with sobs, Sita said to him:—

"O Hanuman, do not fail to offer my good wishes for their welfare to those two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, who resemble two lions and to Sugriva also and his court. Do that which will cause the long-armed Raghava to deliver me from this ocean of affliction, where I am held prisoner. On thy return, when thou art near him, tell him of my harsh and bitter affliction and the threats of the titans! May prosperity attend thee, O Chief of the Monkeys."

Having received these instructions from the princess, the monkey, his purpose accomplished, exceedingly exultant, reflecting that little remained for him to do, had already crossed the northern region in thought.

CHAPTER 41

Hanuman destroys the Ashoka Grove

HAVING been honoured by Sita, the monkey, leaving that place, began to reflect on what little remained for him to do since he had discovered that dark-eyed Princess.

Dismissing the three means to success, the fourth now appeared to him as appropriate and he reflected in himself: " Because of their nature, one may not enter into negotiation with the titans nor do gifts avail with the wealthy; one is unable to sow dissension among those who are proud of their strength, there remains therefore prowess as applicable here. In these circumstances, valour is the only resource. When these titans see the foremost of their warriors fall in combat, their martial ardour will be subdued. He who accomplishes his main purpose and compasses innumerable other engagements without jeopardising the original enterprise, is a skilful messenger. He who employs all his resources to execute a minor task, has no sagacity, but the one who uses countless means with the minimum effort, is wise. Though my mission has been fulfilled, yet if, returning to the abode of the King of the Monkeys, I have ascertained the strength of the foe and ourselves in the field, I shall have truly carried out his commands. How shall I act so that my presence here proves fruitful? How can I provoke an encounter with the titans and what can I do so that that Ten-necked One will be made to measure his strength with mine own? Coming face to face with Dashagriva on the field accompanied by his counsellors, his army and charioteer, I shall easily read his intentions and then take my leave.

"I shall now proceed to lay waste this magnificent grove, resembling the Nandana Gardens, that ravishes the eye and where every variety of tree and creeper, is found, as the forest fire consumes the dead trees and this destruction will incite Ravana's fury. Thereafter the King of the Titans will call upon his immense army furnished with tridents and iron pikes, and the horsemen, chariots and elephants, of which it is composed, and a formidable struggle will ensue. Then I shall fight with all my strength against those titans and having defeated the assembled forces of Ravana, I shall return safely to the King of the Monkeys."

Thinking thus, Maruti, like a raging tempest, with immense energy began to root up the trees with his powerful and sinuous thighs, breaking them down, as also the creepers of that grove, where the trumpeting of maddened elephants could be heard.

With its trees uprooted, its foundations shattered, the crests of the hills broken away and all that was fair laid waste, the copper-tinted buds, the trees and creepers withering away, that grove appeared as if a fire had consumed it and the flowering sprays blown hither and thither, resembled women with their robes in disarray. With its grassy dells and charming pavilions ruined, tiger, deer and birds emitting cries of fear and the edifices crumbling, that great demesne was bereft of beauty. And that grove, belonging to the women of the inner apartments, where they were wont to sport, with its avenues of Ashoka trees and its creepers, now laid waste by that monkey, was transformed by him into a heap of ruins.

Then having given that powerful lord of the earth cause for severe displeasure, that monkey, eager to fight against those countless valiant titans single-handed, stationed himself at the gate, blazing with effulgence.

CHAPTER 42

He destroys the Kinkaras

MEANWHILE the cries of birds and the crash of falling trees, struck terror into the hearts of the inhabitants of Lanka. Wild

beasts and birds fled hither and thither in terror on every side and inauspicious omens appeared.

Waking from sleep, those grim-visaged titan women beheld the grove devastated by that mighty and heroic monkey and, in order to inspire them with fear, that long-armed one, full of energy, began to increase in size and they, observing that immense ape, as high as a hill, of unimagined power, enquired of Janaka's daughter, saying :—

" Who is this being ? From whence and wherefore has he come hither ? Why did he converse with thee ? Tell us, O Large-eyed Lady, have no fear O Dark-eyed Lovely One."

Thereupon, the virtuous Sita, of faultless limbs, answered them saying :—" Since the titans are able to change their form at will, by what means should I be able to recognise them ? Ye know what he is and what he is about ! Without doubt, serpents know the secret of the serpent's tail ! As for me, I am terrified nor do I know what he is but believe him to be a titan, who has come hither, able to change his form at will."

Hearing Vaidehi's words, the titan women fled with all speed, a few only remaining, whilst some hastened to inform Ravana of what had taken place.

Thereafter those female titans of hideous aspect, approached the King of the Titans and informed him of that monstrous and formidable monkey in the Ashoka grove, saying :—

" O King, there is a monkey of immense size, endowed with immeasurable strength, who, having held converse with Sita, remains there. We besought the daughter of Janaka whose eyes resemble a doe's, to inform us who this monkey was but she would not disclose it. It may be that he is an emissary of Indra or Kuvera or even of Rama himself, who is anxious to discover where Sita is. This being of strange aspect, has completely destroyed thy wonderful pleasure garden that was filled with beasts of every kind. There is not a single quarter that has not been laid waste by him, save the place where the divine Janaki abides, whether to preserve her or for reasons of exhaustion, we know not, but since he is a stranger to fatigue, we deem it is on account of this woman. And the Ashoka tree, covered with buds and lovely foliage, under the shade

of which Sita is sheltering, has been spared by him. It behoveth thee to inflict some severe penalty on this formidable being, who has held converse with Sita and destroyed the grove. O Lord of the Hosts of Titans, who would dare to converse with her for whom thine heart yearns without suffering death?"

Hearing the words of the demons, Ravana, the King of the Titans, his eyes rolling in rage, flamed up like a funeral pyre and, in his wrath tears fell from his eyes like drops of burning oil from a lighted lamp.

Then that mighty monarch ordered those titans named Kinkaras, whose strength equalled his own, to seize Hanuman whereupon eighty thousand of those retainers speedily issued from the palace, bearing maces and iron hooks in their hands. Possessing huge stomachs and large teeth, formidable to look upon, filled with valour and martial ardour, they were all burning to lay hold of that monkey. Approaching Hanuman who was standing at the gate ready to fight, those powerful titans rushed upon him like moths on a flame. Equipped with maces of different kinds and gold-encircled bracelets, with arrows bright as the sun, hammers, axes, spears, darts and lances, they surrounded Hanuman and began their attack. Then he, full of strength and courage, resembling a hill, lashing his tail, began to roar, waving it to and fro, and expanding in size, that son of the Wind-god filled Lanka with his bellowing. On account of the noise of the swishing of his tail and his roaring, the birds began to fall from the air and he proclaimed in a loud voice:—"Victory to the mighty Rama and the valiant Lakshmana! Victory to Sugriva, protected by Raghava! I am the servant of the Sovereign of Koshala, Rama, of imperishable exploits, I am Hanuman, the destroyer of hostile armies, the offspring of Maruta. A thousand Ravanas cannot stand before me in combat, when I crush them beneath a myriad trees and rocks! Under the very eyes of the titans, I shall destroy the City of Lanka and, paying obeisance to Maithili, depart, my purpose being accomplished!"

On hearing his shouts, the titans were seized with terror and they beheld him standing aloft like a great evening cloud and, knowing now that that monkey had been despatched by

his master, under the command of their lord they began to assail him on all sides with every kind of formidable weapon.

Surrounded by those warriors, that mighty monkey seized hold of an iron bar that stood near the gate, and lifting it, struck those Rangers of the Night, and he appeared like Vinata's offspring carrying away a struggling serpent. Grasping the weapon, that valiant monkey began to destroy those demons, moving here and there in the air, as Indra of a thousand eyes crushed the Daityas with his thunderbolt.

Having slain the titans, that heroic and powerful son of Maruta, thirsting for combat, stationed himself at the gate.

Thereafter the few titans, who had escaped, informed Ravana of the destruction of his servants and, hearing that a mighty host of demons had been slain, the king, his eyes rolling in wrath, commanded the son of Prahasta, who was endowed with matchless courage, invincible in battle, to go forth.

CHAPTER 43

He burns the Temple and Monument

HAVING slain the Kinkaras, Hanuman, reflecting awhile, thought to himself:—" I have laid waste the grove but I have not destroyed the sacred temple, I shall now demolish this sanctuary."

Thinking thus, the son of Maruta, displaying his prowess, bounded to the temple that was as high as the peak of Mount Meru, and scaling that edifice, that resembled a mountain, that chief of the monkeys, manifested a great effulgence, equal to the radiance of the sunrise. Thereafter he began to destroy that lofty sanctuary which shone with a glory equal to the Pariyatra Mountain. Assuming immense proportions, the illustrious son of Maruta, in his intrepidity, caused Lanka to tremble, filling it with his roaring and, at that terrifying and deafening clamour, the birds and the guardians of the temple, fell to the ground, their senses overcome.

Thereupon Hanuman cried out: " Victory to Rama, skilled in the use of weapons and to the courageous Lakshmana! Victory to King Sugriva, Rama's henchman! I am Hanuman, the destroyer of hostile armies, son of Maruta, and the servant of Rama, King of Koshala, of immortal exploits! When I hurl down trees and rocks, not even a thousand Ravanas can withstand me in combat. Having destroyed the City of Lanka and paid my obeisance to the daughter of the King of Mithila, my purpose fulfilled, I shall depart."

Having spoken thus, the colossal leader of the monkeys, standing on that edifice, emitted a roar and the hideous clamour struck terror into the hearts of the titans.

In consequence of that great tumult, a hundred temple guards sallied forth, bearing every kind of weapon, dart, scimitar, arrow and axe; and surrounding Maruti struck him with clubs and bars encircled with golden bands. Hurling themselves on that excellent monkey with arrows bright as the sun, that host of titans resembled a mighty whirlpool in the Ganges.

Thereat the son of the Wind, the mighty Hanuman, waxing wrath, taking on a formidable aspect and tearing up from that sanctuary a huge pillar plated with gold, which emitted a hundred rays, spun it round rapidly with great energy, so that the fire generated therefrom set the temple ablaze. Seeing that monument in flames, the leader of monkeys having despatched a hundred titans, resembled Indra slaying the demons with his thunderbolt and, standing in space, he cried out exultingly:—

" Thousands of leaders of monkeys, resembling myself, valiant and brave, are scouring the whole earth under Sugriva's command. Among these, some are as strong as elephants, others ten times as strong, some have the energy of a thousand elephants, some of a whole herd and some have the strength of the wind, while a few possess a strength that may not be measured. Such are the monkeys, armed with teeth and claws, that in hundreds and thousands and millions, will accompany Sugriva when he comes to exterminate you all. Then neither the city of Lanka nor any of you nor Ravana himself will survive, since they have incurred the wrath of that hero of the House of Ikshwaku."

CHAPTER 44

The Death of Jambumalin

UNDER the order of the King of the Titans, the valiant son of Prahasta, Jambumalin of large teeth, went out bearing his bow. Wearing garlands and red attire with a crown and brilliant ear-rings, that invincible warrior of immense stature, rolling his eyes ferociously drew his great bow, furnished with shining arrows, equal to Indra's, with a noise like thunder. Then the entire sky and the four quarters at once re-echoed to the sound of the stretching of that bow.

Beholding him advance in a chariot yoked to asses, Hanuman, endowed with great vigour, emitted cries of exultation. Thereat the highly powerful Jambumalin riddled him with whetted shafts, piercing the face of that leader of monkeys with a crescent-shaped arrow, his head with one furnished with plumes and his arms with ten having iron tips. Struck by those arrows, his coppery countenance shone like an autumn cloud lit by the rays of the sun and his ruddy face, stained with vermilion, resembled a red lotus in the sky, sprinkled with drops of gold.

Wounded by those shafts, that mighty monkey was enraged and seeing a great rock of vast size lying near, he raised it up and hurled it against his adversary with violence, who countered it with ten of his shafts. Perceiving this feat brought to nought, Hanuman, in fury, tore up a mighty Sala tree and began to whirl it in the air, whereupon the highly powerful Jambumalin, seeing that great monkey spinning the Sala tree, let loose innumerable shafts, severing it with four arrows and piercing the arms of that monkey with five others, his belly with a further dart, thereafter piercing him between the breasts with ten more.

His body, covered with darts, a prey to violent anger, Hanuman, seizing a club, spun it with extreme velocity, allowing it to fall on the huge chest of his adversary, whereupon

neither his head, arms, thighs, bow, his chariot, his steeds nor arrows could be distinguished, and that mighty car warrior, Jambumalin, dropped to the earth, like an oak that has been felled, his limbs and ornaments crushed.

Then Ravana, hearing that Jambumalin had been slain, as also the powerful Kinkaras, was overcome with wrath. Rolling his eyes inflamed with fury, that Lord of the Titans instantly issued a command that the sons of his ministers, who were endowed with exceeding valour and strength, should go forth to the attack.

CHAPTER 45

Hanuman slays the Sons of Ravana's Ministers

THEN under the command of that Indra of Titans, the sons of his ministers, seven in number, resembling the fire in splendour, set out from the palace. Escorted by a large army, furnished with bows, full of energy, skilled in the use of weapons, they, the flower of warriors, were each burning for victory. Mounted in great chariots plated with gold, surmounted by banners, yoked to horses, they created a noise resembling thunder. Of unequalled courage, stretching their bows inlaid with refined gold, like unto flashes of lightning athwart the clouds, those warriors sallied forth.

Their mothers nevertheless, knowing of the death of the Kinkaras, were overcome with anxiety as also their friends and kinsfolk.

And, exhorting one another, clad in golden armour, they rushed on Hanuman, who stood erect at the gate. From their thundering cars, they loosed innumerable shafts like clouds in the rainy season, and, covered by that hail of missiles, Hanuman's body was concealed, as the King of the Mountains is obscured by rain.

Then that monkey evaded those arrows and their swiftly moving chariots by executing countless skilful evolutions in the air and appeared like Indra sporting with his archers,

the clouds. Sending up a mighty shout which struck terror into the great host, that valiant monkey leapt on the titans. The scourge of his foes struck some of them with the palm of his hands and others with his feet; some he hit with his fists and some he tore with his nails, striking them down with his chest and thighs, while some fell to the ground by the force of his cry. Felled to the earth, those warriors lay dying and the entire army fled to the four quarters, filled with terror. Elephants trumpeted and horses fell slain; the ground was strewn with the broken fragments of chariots, seats, banners and canopies; rivers of blood could be seen flowing on the highways and Lanka re-echoed with fearful cries.

Having slaughtered those mighty titans, that heroic monkey, burning with courage, desiring to measure his strength against other demons, stationed himself at the gate once more.

CHAPTER 46

He annihilates five Generals and their Forces

LEARNING that the sons of his ministers had fallen under the blows of that great monkey, Ravana, with a darkened countenance, concealing his fears, formed a resolution which he deemed would prove decisive.

Thereupon Dashagriva commanded the leaders of his forces, Virupaksha, Yupaksha, Durdharsha, Praghasa and Basakarna, masters of strategy, endowed with the speed of the wind, brave and skilful warriors, to take Hanuman captive, saying:—

"Ye Generals, who are full of valour, set out at the head of your troops with your fleet of horses, chariots and elephants and take this monkey prisoner. Approaching that dweller of the woods, exercise great circumspection and act with due consideration for time and place. Having regard to his conduct, I do not judge him to be a monkey, he being endowed with extraordinary prowess. I deem him to be a higher being and not a monkey; perchance he is an emissary created

by Indra by virtue of his penances in order to destroy us. Under my command, ye have all triumphed over Nagas, Yakshas, Gandharvas, Devas, Asuras and great Rishis; undoubtedly they are plotting some treachery against us, therefore seize this being by force. O Generals, let each go forth at the head of a mighty host, attended by horses, chariots and elephants and take this monkey prisoner. In former times I have seen monkeys endowed with immense energy, like Bali, Sugriva, the exceedingly powerful Jambavan, the General Nila and others, such as Dvivida, yet there was nothing alarming in their gait, their energy, their prowess, their intelligence, their conduct or their capacity to assume different forms, this, however, is some great being masquerading as a monkey. Even though the Three Worlds with Indra, the Gods, the titans and men cannot resist you on the field of battle, great efforts will be needed to lay hold of him. Nevertheless, even a seasoned warrior, desiring to triumph in combat, is not able to defend his life without exertion, for the outcome of a battle is uncertain."

Obedient to the commands of their lord, all those valiant titans, resplendent as fire, attended by their troops, threw themselves in all haste into their chariots with sharp and pointed weapons and on to their swift steeds and elephants maddened with ichor.

Then those warriors beheld that mighty monkey, shining like the sun that rises with its diadem of sparkling rays, and seeing him stationed at the gate, possessed of immense strength and speed, highly intelligent and brave, with his vast stature and huge arms, they were afraid and assailed him from all sides with their dreadful weapons.

Then Durdharsha discharged five white iron, and yellow pointed arrows at Hanuman's forehead, possessing the lustre of lotus petals, and his head being pierced with those shafts, that monkey leapt into the air making the ten cardinal points ring with his cry, whereupon that powerful and heroic warrior Durdharsha, standing in his chariot with his bow stretched, advanced, letting fly a hundred arrows at once. Thereupon, Hanuman, like unto the wind driving away clouds, intercepted those arrows while coursing in the sky, and sore beset by

Durdharsha, the offspring of the Wind expanded in size, emitting loud roars, and thereafter, with a great bound swooped on the chariot of Durdharsha with extreme force, like a succession of lightning flashes striking a mountain. Thrown from his car, his eight steeds mangled, the pole and the shaft broken, that warrior fell to the earth, slain.

Then Virupaksha and Yupaksha, seeing him lying on the ground, waxing wrath sprang up and advanced on Hanuman dealing blows with their maces, striking the chest of that long-armed monkey as he stood in space; whereupon he meeting the shock of their assault, evaded their arrows and, that exceedingly powerful monkey, the son of Anila, swooped down on the earth like an eagle; thereafter seizing and uprooting a Sala tree, assailing those two titans with blows, that offspring of the Wind-god slew those two mighty and heroic demons.

Then learning that those three titans had been slain by the monkey, endowed with great swiftness, the courageous Praghasa rushed upon him laughing scornfully and the audacious Basakarna enraged, armed with a spear, also advanced towards him. Then each from his side attacked that lion among monkeys. Praghasa assailing him with a sharp-edged axe and Basakarna with his spear and, with his body streaming with blood, his limbs lacerated by their blows, that monkey, highly enraged looked like the rising sun.

Thereafter that heroic monkey, Hanuman, breaking off the peak of a mountain, together with its beasts, snakes and trees, crushed those titans, grinding them to dust; and having slain those five generals, that monkey proceeded to destroy the remaining host. As the Thousand-eyed Deity destroyed the Asuras, so did Hanuman, the horses with horses, the elephants with elephants, chariots with chariots, and warriors with warriors and the pathways were choked with elephants, shattered chariots and the bodies of the titans. Having destroyed those heroic generals with their forces and vehicles, that hero, resembling Time, pausing at the destruction of the worlds, rested at the gate.

CHAPTER 47

The Death of Aksha

HEARING that those five generals with their forces and vehicles had been struck down by Hanuman, the King of the Titans glanced at the youthful Aksha, who full of martial ardour sat before him; and that impetuous warrior, armed with a bow inlaid with gold, responding to his glance, leapt up like a flame that blazes forth when fed with clarified butter by the foremost of sages in the sacrificial chamber.

And he ascended a chariot, acquired at the price of accumulated sacrifice, plated with refined gold, dressed with flags embroidered with pearls, yoked to eight steeds swift as thought, unconquerable by Gods or titans, surmounting every obstacle, flashing like lightning, of superb workmanship, able to travel through space, equipped with quivers, arrows, eight swords, darts and lances in orderly array, bound with golden ropes, shining with its myriad weapons, bearing golden garlands, rivalling the radiance of the sun and moon. Filling the firmament, the earth and its mountains with the sound of horses, elephants and great chariots, Aksha, at the head of his forces, advanced on that monkey, who was stationed on the gate.

Coming before that monkey, Aksha, with the gaze of a lion, in which admiration and respect were mingled, measured Hanuman with his glance, who resembled the fire at the dissolution of the worlds intent on destroying all creatures. Thereafter that mighty son of Ravana, reflecting on the exceeding valour of that monkey, his prowess in regards to the enemy and on his own strength, swelled up with pride and resembled the sun at the end of the world cycle. Then summoning up his courage, enraged, he took his stand resolutely in the field, and with concentrated mind challenged Hanuman, irresistible in combat and of unimaginable prowess, directing three whetted shafts upon him.

Observing that audacious monkey, indifferent to fatigue, accustomed to overcoming his foes and proud, Aksha took up his bow, holding his arrows in his hand. Wearing a corselet and bracelets of gold, with marvellous earrings, endowed with martial ardour, Aksha rushed on that monkey and a terrific struggle ensued which was unparalleled on earth and struck terror even in the Gods and titans. Witnessing that mighty conflict between the monkey and the youthful titan, the earth cried out, the sun ceased to pour down its warming rays, the wind no longer blew and the mountains shook; the whole firmament was filled with the sound and the ocean was convulsed. Then that hero, skilled in directing his aim, fixed his shafts and loosing them pierced that monkey in the forehead with three steel pointed winged arrows plated with gold and resembling venomous snakes.

Wounded by those murderous darts, his eyes blinded by the blood flowing from his brow, Hanuman resembled the rising sun, having arrows for its rays. Beholding that offspring of the foremost of monarchs with his splendid weapons upraised and his marvellous bow, that valiant counsellor of the Lord of the Monkeys rejoiced and in his ardour put forth his whole strength. Resembling the sun crowned with an aureole of rays as it rises over the peak of the Mandara Mountain, Hanuman, inflamed with ire, filled with strength and energy, consumed the youthful Aksha with his forces and vehicles by his fiery glances.

Thereupon that titan, from his bow equal unto Indra's charged with innumerable darts, let fall a mighty shower of arrows on the foremost of monkeys in the fight, as a cloud looses its waters on a lofty mountain.

Seeing the youthful Aksha on the field, seething with wrath and filled with valour, energy and strength, furnished with arrows, that monkey shouted aloud in exultation and, as an elephant draws near to a pit concealed in the grass, so did Aksha, in the inexperience of his youth, giving rein to his fury, proud of his valour, approach that incomparable warrior in conflict. Hanuman struck by those shafts, emitted a loud roar resembling a thunder cloud and, assuming a formidable aspect, full of vigour, agitating his legs and arms, churned up the air.

Leaping upwards, that valiant titan, raining arrows, hurled himself upon Hanuman and that foremost of titans, exceedingly skilled, greatest of car-warriors, Aksha, burning with courage, covered him with a hail of shafts, as a cloud covers the mountains with hailstones. Evading those arrows by darting between them, that heroic monkey, with the speed of the wind, swift as thought, began to range the path of the air. Casting glances full of pride on Aksha, who was armed with bow and arrows, burning to fight and, filling the sky with his countless excellent shafts, that offspring of the Wind-god became thoughtful and his breast, pierced by the shafts of that youthful and powerful hero, he emitted a great shout. Recognising the skill of Aksha, he pondered on the warlike qualities of that warrior, reflecting :—

"This great and powerful warrior, like an infant sun in splendour, has accomplished deeds incapable of being performed by a boy; I am loath to slay one who has shown himself equal to every martial feat; he is high-souled, filled with valour, concentrated and able to endure extreme hardship in war, worthy of being honoured by the great Sages, Nagas and Yakshas; his strength and courage lend him a noble assurance and standing before me, he looks me straight in the eyes. Forsooth the heroism of this audacious being would shake the soul of the Gods and titans themselves. Verily he is an adversary not to be despised, his prowess increases as he fights; if I disregard him, he will defeat me, therefore I must destroy him for a spreading fire may not be neglected."

Reflecting thus on the strength of his foe and his own, that powerful one, endowed with energy, resolved to slay his adversary. Thereafter that valiant monkey, born of Pavana, coursing through the air, struck those eight excellent steeds of immense size capable of bearing a heavy burden in combat with the palm of his hand and, that great chariot, overturned by the blow administered by the counsellor of the King of the Monkeys, its pole shattered, the shafts riven, the steeds slain, fell to the earth from the sky.

Thereupon, abandoning his car, bearing his bow and sword, that warrior leapt into the air, as an ascetic consequent on his penances ascends to heaven on leaving the body.

Rising into the sky frequented by the King of the Birds, the wind and the Celestials, that monkey, with a single bound, seizing hold of his legs, as Garuda catches hold of a snake, with a strength equal to his sire's, spun him round and round and threw him violently on the earth. With his arms, thighs and chest crushed, vomiting blood, his bones and eyes pulverised, his joints dislocated, his sinews torn, he fell to earth slain by the Son of the Wind.

Thereupon that mighty monkey trod his rival underfoot, striking terror into the heart of the King of the Titans, and all the Rishis, Cakracaras, Bhutas, Yakshas, Pannagas and Suras assembled with their leader Indra, who gazed with wonder on the simian slayer of that youthful titan. And Hanuman, having destroyed the stripling Aksha, whose eyes were inflamed with blood on the field of battle, returned to the gate once more and waited there like Death at the time of the destruction of all creatures.

CHAPTER 48

Hanuman allows himself to be taken captive by the Titans

THE youthful Aksha having been slain by Hanuman, Ravana, controlling his agitation, filled with anger, commanded Indrajita, who resembled a god, to take the field, saying :—

" Thou art the foremost of those bearing arms and hast afflicted even the Gods and Asuras in war ; thou art renowned among warriors and hast acquired divine weapons by the grace of Brahma ; thou art invincible in combat, even against the Maruts led by Indra himself. There is none in the Three Worlds who does not tire in battle, save thou. Thou art preserved by thy prowess in arms and thy valour is thy shield ; being versed in the knowledge of time and place, thou art exceedingly experienced and no feat is impossible for thee to accomplish in the field, who art full of forethought ; there is none in the Three Worlds but is conversant with thine austerities equal to mine own, as also thy prowess and the strength

of thine arms in combat, nay, depending on thee, I have no anxiety regarding the outcome of the fray.

" In truth I did not put the same reliance on those who have succombed that I now place in thee, O Destroyer of Thy Foes, neither in the Kinkaras nor in Jambumalin, the son of my counsellor nor in the five generals going forth at the head of their troops with innumerable forces, accompanied by horses, elephants and chariots nor in the youthful, dearly beloved, Aksha, slain by that monkey. O Hero, thou surpassest them all, therefore, reflecting on thine own strength, with all haste act in such a manner that the destruction of the army may be avoided. O Foremost of those bearing arms, considering thine own prowess and that of thine adversary, who now reposes quietly after creating carnage among these hostile hosts, act so that his might may be subdued. Powerful forces can serve no purpose here, for great armies flee before Hanuman nor do maces avail; the speed of Maruti is irresistible and, like unto Agni, he may not be slain by weapons. Therefore, revolving all these things in thy mind and reflecting on the divine quality of thy bow, with the intention of bringing about a successful issue, strive with determination to overcome thy foe by frustrating his attacks. Assuredly it was not my will to expose thee to this hazard, O Foremost among those endowed with intelligence, yet this course of action is approved by warriors and is in accord with the duty of kings. In war one must be versed in the traditions as also in the rules of military science in order to emerge triumphant from the struggle."

Hearing the words of his sire, Indrajita, whose prowess was equal to that of the son of Daksha, circumambulated him and inspired with martial ardour, prepared to fight. Overwhelmed with homage by his cherished companions, who had assembled there, he set out for battle. And the resplendent son of the King of the Titans, whose eyes resembled the petals of a lotus, bounded impetuously forward, like the ocean at the time of the full moon. Thereafter, Indrajita of matchless prowess, equal unto Indra, ascended his chariot, swift as the eagle or the wind, moving freely, drawn by four lions with pure white teeth.

Standing in his chariot, that most skilled of archers, fully conversant with the use of weapons, the foremost of warriors drove rapidly to where Hanuman was to be found.

Hearing the rumbling of wheels and the twanging of the bowstring, the delight of that monkey was redoubled, whereupon Indrajita, seizing his bow and steel-pointed arrows, versed in the art of warfare, proceeded towards Hanuman and as he advanced light-heartedly, his weapons in his hand, the four quarters grew dark and jackals set up a hideous howling. Nagas, Yakshas, Maharishis, Cakracaras and Siddhas assembled and the sky was filled with birds emitting piercing cries.

Seeing that chariot bearing down on him, the standard of Indra unfurled, that monkey raised a great shout and expanded his body; whereupon, Indrajita in his celestial car, drew back his marvellous bow, emitting a sound like thunder and those two powerful heroes closed in conflict, the monkey and the son of the King of the Titans, like unto God and demon.

Indifferent to danger they began to fight and that mighty monkey evaded the impetuous army of that valiant archer and consummate warrior in his great car, by executing a myriad evolutions in the air with indescribable agility. Thereupon, the heroic Indrajita, slayer of his foes, began to discharge his marvellous superbly-fashioned sharp steel-pointed and winged arrows, tipped with gold, swift as lightning. Hearing the rumbling of that chariot, the rolling of the drums together with the sound of the stretching of the bow, Hanuman leapt hither and thither and that mighty monkey, evading the rain of arrows, skilfully eluded that dexterious bowman, whose target he was, and stretching out his arms, Hanuman, the son of Anila, turning aside from those missiles, leapt into the sky. Thus those skilful and spirited warriors, exceedingly swift in motion and versed in the art of warfare, engaged in combat to the wonder of all beings. Nor was the titan able to take Hanuman unawares nor Maruti surprise Indrajita, as they hurled themselves on one another with a courage worthy of the Gods.

Observing him unscathed although the target of his infallible arrows, Indrajita, controlling his senses, engaged in profound concentration of thought on Hanuman, and finding him

incapable of being slain, he began to consider how he could be bound fast and that most experienced of warriors, full of exceeding energy, discharged that powerful weapon conferred on him by Brahma on that illustrious monkey. Knowing him to be incapable of being slain, Indrajita, skilled in strategy, bound that offspring of the Wind-god with the aid of that weapon.

Struck by the titan with the Brahma-weapon, that monkey fell to the earth unconscious, but knowing himself to be bound by a shaft belonging to the Lord, he did not experience the least pain and though bereft of strength, that monkey bethought himself of Brahma's blessing. Then that heroic monkey began to recollect the boons conferred on him by Brahma and thinking of that weapon bestowed by the Self-create, consecrated by mantras, he reflected: "I may not release myself from these bonds in virtue of the power of that Guru of the World. Further, this subjugation has been ordained by Him and must be endured by me."

Thereupon, reflecting on the power of that weapon and the compassion of the Grandsire of the World towards him, also of the possibility of deliveiance, that monkey submitted himself to Brahma's decree.

He thought: "Though made fast by this weapon, I experience no fear; the Grandsire of the World, Mahendra and Anila will protect me; in sooth I deem it to be to mine advantage to fall into the hands of the titans and thus come face to face with their great king, therefore let mine enemies take me captive!"

Having thus resolved, that destroyer of his foes, full of circumspection, lay motionless and being ruthlessly pinioned by the titans, he responded to their threats and abuses by leonine roars. Beholding that subduer of his foes lying motionless, the titans bound him with plaited ropes of hemp and bark and he willingly allowed himself to be tied and insulted by his foes in order that he might converse with the King of the Titans, should he, out of curiosity, desire to see him. Bound with ropes, the monkey was no longer under the sway of the Brahma-weapon, for, he being secured by other bonds, it was rendered void. Beholding that excellent

monkey bound with bark, the valiant Indrajita recognised him to be freed from that supernatural weapon and became pensive, saying aloud :—

"Alas, those titans have rendered my exploit useless, not being conversant with the power of mantras and that Brahma-weapon being rendered void, no other is effective, thus we are all placed in a great predicament for this weapon may not be loosed twice."

Though delivered from the power of that weapon, Hanuman betrayed it by no sign, despite the suffering caused by the fetters that bound him and he allowed himself to be ill-treated by the titans and assaulted by those cruel demons who struck him with their fists and dragged him before Ravana. Freed from the Brahma-weapon, yet bound by hempen ropes, that powerful and heroic monkey was paraded by Indrajita before Ravana and his court. And those titans related to the king everything concerning that foremost of monkeys, who resembled a maddened elephant that has been bound.

On seeing the foremost of monkeys made captive, those warlike titans enquired saying :—"Who is this? Who has sent him? From whence has he come? What is his mission? Who are his supporters?" and others exclaimed angrily: "Kill him! Burn him! Devour him!"

Having come some way, Hanuman observed elderly attendants seated at the feet of their sovereign and he gazed with admiration on the palace decorated with gems.

Then the exceedingly powerful Ravana beheld that foremost of monkeys dragged hither and thither by those hideous titans, and Hanuman gazed at the Lord of the Titans, who was like unto a blazing sun in his might and glory.

Seeing Hanuman, that Ten-headed One issued orders to his chief ministers, distinguished for their lineage and character, who stood before him and commanded them to interrogate that monkey. Thereupon, questioned in turn by them concerning the purpose of his coming, Hanuman answered :— "I am a messenger, I come from King Sugriva."

CHAPTER 49

His Astonishment on beholding Ravana

PONDERING on the exploits of that one of exceeding prowess, Hanuman gazed with wonder on the King of the Titans, whose eyes were red with anger and who was blazing with rare and dazzling gold, adorned with a splendid diadem studded with pearls and excellent ornaments of diamonds and precious stones created by the power of concentrated thought. Attired in costly linen, daubed with red sandalpaste painted with variegated devices, he looked splendid with his reddened eyes, fierce gaze, brilliant sharp teeth and protruding lips.

To that monkey, that Ten-Headed One, who was resplendent and of great energy, resembled the Mandara Mountain with its summits infested with innumerable snakes or a mass of blue antimony. A string of pearls gleaming on his breast, his countenance possessing the lustre of the full moon, he resembled a cloud illumined by the rising sun. With his great arms laden with bracelets, smeared with sandal paste, his fingers, like five-headed serpents covered with sparkling rings, he was seated on a superb and marvellously inlaid crystal throne studded with gems and covered with rich hangings. Women, sumptuously attired, surrounded him, chowries in their hands and he was attended by four experienced counsellors, Durdhara, Prahasta, Mahaparshwa and the minister Nikumbha who stood round him like the four seas surrounding the earth; and other counsellors too waited upon him as do the Gods on their King.

Then Hanuman gazed on the Lord of the Titans, clothed in extreme splendour, resembling the peak of Mount Meru surrounded by thunder clouds and, though suffering at the hands of those titans of dreadful prowess, Hanuman experienced extreme astonishment at the sight of that monarch and beholding the effulgence of that Lord of the Titans, dazzled by his magnificence, he became absorbed in thought.

'What splendour, what power, what glory, what majesty, he reflected, 'nothing is lacking! Were he not evil, this mighty monarch of the titans could be the protector of the celestial realm and Indra himself, but his cruel and ruthless deeds, abhorrent to all, render him the scourge of the worlds as also of the Gods and demons; in his anger he could make an ocean of the earth!'

Such were the diverse thoughts of that sagacious monkey on beholding the immeasurable power and might of the King of the Titans.

CHAPTER 50

Hanuman is questioned by the Titans

BEHOLDING that tawny-eyed one standing before him, the mighty-armed Ravana, the terror of the worlds, was seized with violent rage. Gazing on that lion among monkeys radiating splendour, his mind filled with apprehension, he reflected:—

"Is this the blessed Nandi, who has come hither, he who formerly cursed me when, on Mount Kailasha, he became the object of my mockery? Or is he perchance Vana Bali's son in the form of a monkey."

His eyes red with anger, the king then addressed the foremost of his counsellors, Prahasta, in words that were opportune and fraught with good sense, saying:—

"Demand of this perverse wretch, whence he has come, for what reason he laid waste the grove and why he slew the titans? What is his purpose in entering this impregnable citadel and why did he attack my retainers? Interrogate this scoundrel concerning these matters!"

At these words of Ravana, Prahasta said to Hanuman:—

"O Monkey, be of good courage, thou hast nought to fear! If it be Indra who has sent thee to Ravana's abode, tells us frankly! Have no anxiety, thou shalt be liberated! If thou art from Vaishravana, Yama or Varuna and have penetrated into our city disguising thy real form or if thou hast been

dispatched by Vishnu, hungry for conquest, then tell us. Thy form alone is that of a monkey, not thy prowess. Unfold all this unto us faithfully, O Monkey and thou shalt instantly regain thy freedom but if thou liest, thou shalt pay for it with thy life! Therefore tell us why thou hast entered Ravana's abode."

Thus addressed, the foremost of monkeys answered the Lord of the Titans, saying:—

"I am not from Shakra nor Yama nor Varuna nor am I allied to Kuvera nor am I sent by Vishnu. I am truly a monkey as I appear to be, who have come here in order to behold the King of the Titans and for this purpose I destroyed the grove. To preserve my life I fought with the titans who, full of valour, presented themselves before me. Neither weapons nor chains can subdue me, even those of the Gods and titans themselves, I having received this boon from the Grandsire of the World. It was because I desired to see the king that I suffered myself to be overcome by the Brahma-weapon. Though I was not under the spell of that weapon, yet I permitted the titans to capture me in order to further Rama's design for which purpose I have entered the king's presence. Knowlng me to be the messenger of Raghava, whose power is limitless, listen to my words, which will prove to thine advantage, O Lord."

CHAPTER 51

His Words

SEEING the mighty ten-headed Ravana, that intrepid monkey addressed him fearlessly, in words fraught with penetration, saying:—

"I have come here at the command of Sugriva, O Lord of the Titans! As a brother, that Sovereign of the Monkeys offers salutations to thee. Hear the counsel of a brother, the magnanimous Sugriva; his words are in accord with justice, advantageous and salutary both in this world and hereafter.

King Dasaratha, the master of chariots, elephants and horses, in splendour equal to Indra, was the friend of all and

like unto a father to his subjects. His eldest son, mighty-armed, the darling of his sire, at his command, entered the Dandaka Forest with his brother Lakshmana and his consort Sita. His name is Rama and he is exceedingly valiant and ever abides in the path of virtue. His faithful consort, Sita, the illustrious daughter of the high-souled Janaka, King of Videha, vanished in the forest of Janasthana. Seeking for that princess, the king's son with his younger brother came to Rishyamuka and met with Sugriva. That King of the Monkeys promised to undertake the search for Sita and Rama agreed to aid him in recovering the monkey kingdom. Thereupon, slaying Bali in combat, that king's son established Sugriva on the throne, as lord of all the bears and monkeys. Bali, that bull among monkeys, formerly known to thee, was slain by Rama with a single arrow in the fight, whereupon the Lord of the Monkeys, Sugriva, true to his vow, eager to find Sita, dispatched monkeys in all directions. Hundreds, thousands and millions of monkeys are exploring every region high and low, even up to the heavens and some resemble Vainataya and some the wind and those highly energetic monkeys course hither and thither without rest, incapable of being stayed. I am named Hanuman, the beloved son of Maruta and, in order to find Sita, I have crossed four hundred miles of sea. Having passed over the ocean, wandering through thy palace, I observed Janaka's daughter.

" It does not become thee, who art conversant with what is meet and proper and hast enriched thyself by thy penances, to bear away another's wife, O Eminently Sagacious One. Intelligent beings, such as thou, should not commit acts prohibited by the law of righteousness which lead to ruin! Who, even among the Gods and titans, can withstand the shafts loosed by Lakshmana or those of Raghava in his wrath? Nay, in the Three Worlds, there is none who may affront Rama with impunity. Following the path of duty and profit, do thou ponder these words fraught with advantage to thee in the three divisions of time and restore Janaki to Rama, that lion among men!

" I have seen Sita and achieved that which was difficult to compass, as for what remaineth to be done, Rama himself shall accomplish it. I have beheld her in thine abode, suffering

grievously; thou art seemingly unaware that thou harbourest a five-headed serpent in thy mansion. Even as food mixed with poison may not be digested even by Gods or titans, so is she. It is not worthy of thee to bring to nought that merit acquired by extreme mortification, as also a long and prosperous life. Thou deemest thyself by thy penances, to have won immunity from death even from Gods, Immortals or titans, but Sugriva is neither a God nor an Immortal nor a titan. Raghava, O King, is a mortal and Sugriva, the Lord of Monkeys, therefore how wilt thou preserve thy life? The fruits of virtue do not blend with those of vice nor does equity destroy iniquity, Till to-day thou hast plucked the fruit of thy merits but soon thou wilt reap the fruit of thine evil deeds. Having learnt of the destruction of Janasthana, the death of Bali and the alliance of Rama and Sugriva; ponder on these things to thine own advantage. I am undoubtedly able to destroy Lanka with its horses, chariots and elephants single-handed yet I have not received the mandate to do so. In the presence of the troops of monkeys and bears, Rama vowed to slay his foes, those who bore Sita away. Assuredly, in doing injury to Rama, even Indra himself could not dwell in peace, how much less one like thee. This Sita, who is known to thee and who stays in thine abode is the night of death that will bring about thine end and that of Lanka. Beware of placing thy neck in the noose of death in the form of Sita. Consider how thou mayest save thyself. Thou shalt behold this marvellous city with its palaces and highways consumed by Sita's power and the flames fed by Rama's wrath. Do not therefore abandon friends, ministers, kinsfolk, brothers, sons, servants, wives and Lanka to this fate. O Indra among Titans, follow this good counsel since it is offered to thee by one who is a monkey, the servant and messenger of Rama.

" Having wholly annihilated the worlds and their inhabitants with all that moves or does not move, the illustrious Raghava could re-create them all. Among the chiefs of the Gods, Titans, Yakshas, Danavas, Nagas, Vidyadharas, Gandharvas, wild beasts, Siddhas Kinneras or birds, in no way nor anywhere, at no time, among any beings, has any been found, who could stand against Rama whose valour is equal to Vishnu's.

Since thou hast offered that lion among kings, Rama, this affront, thy life is forfeit!

"Devas, Daityas, Gandharvas, Vidyadharas, Nagas and Yakshas are all unable to hold their own in combat with Rama, the Protector of the Three Worlds, O King of the Titans! Even were it the Four-headed Brahma, Swyambhu Himself or the Three-eyed Rudra, the destroyer of Tripura, or the mighty Indra, Chief of the Gods, not one of them could withstand Raghava in the field."

Hearing this distasteful yet excellent speech of that bold and fearless monkey, the Ten-Necked One, his eyes rolling in anger, ordered him to be put to death.

CHAPTER 52

Bibishana pleads for Hanuman

HEARING the words of that high-souled monkey, Ravana, in a transport of fury, ordered him to be put to death. This decree however, issued by the King of the Titans in his perversity on one who had proclaimed himself to be a messenger, did not meet with the approval of Bibishana.

Knowing that Lord of the Titans to be exceeding wrath and the affair about to be concluded, that prince, firm in justice, began to consider what should now be done and that subduer of his foes, having resolved how to act, addressed his elder brother in words which were essentially true and mild, saying :—

"O King of the Titans, control thine anger and with a tranquil mind hear me, extend thy favour to me. Righteous monarchs, being conversant with the laws of cause and effect, do not take the life of a messenger. O Valiant Prince, it is contrary to justice, opposed to social usage, and unworthy of thee to bring about the death of this monkey. Thou art versed in the moral code, dost recognise an obligation, canst distinguish between high and low, dost carry out thy kingly duties and art aware of the ultimate purpose of life. If the wise, such as

thou, suffer themselves to be mastered by anger, then the study of the scriptures is only a weariness of the flesh. Be pacified therefore, O Slayer of thine Enemies, O Unconquerable Sovereign of the Titans and consider what is meet and just in dealing out punishment to a foe."

Hearing Bibishana's words, Ravana, the Lord of the Titans, in a violent rage, answered him saying :—

"O Scourge of Thy Foes, to slay an evil-doer is no sin, therefore I shall make an end of this worker of iniquity."

Hearing this infamous and unscrupulous speech, essentially perverse, Bibishana, who was the foremost of those endowed with wisdom, answered in words fraught with integrity, saying :—

"O Lord of Lanka, King of all the Titans, be gracious unto me and listen to that which embodies the significance of virtue and profit. Under no conditions is an envoy put to death, this is the unanimous verdict of the good. Undoubtedly this is a formidable adversary and he has inflicted immeasurable injury on us, yet men of honour do not sanction the slaying of a messenger though innumerable punishments have been ordained for them. Mutilation of the body, the whip, stripes, shaving of the head, branding, one or all of these may be inflicted on a messenger but of punishment by death, none has ever heard. How can a hero such as thou art, whose mind is swayed by a sense of duty and who is discriminating and conversant with what is noble and ignoble, suffer himself to be overcome by anger? The virtuous do not give way to wrath! Thou hast no equal among those who rule over a people and thou art able to comprehend the import of the scriptures; thou surpasseth the titans and the Gods. Invincible to the Gods and titans who are endowed with prowess, martial ardour and intelligence, thou hast oft-times in battle routed the King of the Celestials and other monarchs. Fools who, even in thought seek to injure thee, who art a great and intrepid warrior, who hast fought with Daityas and Devas, heroic, intrepid and unconquerable, are already deprived of their lives. I see no justification for putting this monkey to death. It is on those who sent him, that the punishment should fall. Whether he be honest or not, the responsibility

rests with them. Advocating another's interests and dependent on them, an envoy does not merit death. Further if this one be killed, no other sky-ranger may present himself to us, therefore, O Conqueror of Hostile Citadels, do not seek to take his life; direct thine efforts against the Gods and their leader. O Thou who lovest warfare, if he be slain, I see none who can incite those two haughty princes to take arms against thee. It is not fitting for thee, whom the Gods and titans cannot conquer, to rob the Nairritas, whose delight thou art, of the opportunity of witnessing that encounter! They are devoted to thy welfare, courageous, disciplined warriors distinguished for their great qualities, intelligent, renowned for their burning ardour and fine bearing. Therefore let some of these, setting out under thine orders to-day, seize those two princes and establish thy supremacy among thy foes."

On this, Ravana, that sagacious Lord of the Titans, the formidable foe of the celestial realm, recognised the wisdom of the inspired words uttered by his younger brother.

CHAPTER 53

Hanuman is led bound through the City

HEARING the words of his high-souled brother, spoken in consonance with time and place, Dashagriva answered him saying:—

"Thou hast spoken truly, the slaying of a messenger is to be deprecated, it is therefore necessary to inflict some punishment other than death on him. In the case of monkeys, the tail is unquestionably the most cherished embellishment, therefore let it be set on fire and, having been burnt let him go, whereafter his friends, kinsfolk and allies as all those dear to him shall behold him degraded and mutilated."

Then the Lord of the Titans issued this command: "With his tail in flames, let him be led through the city of Lanka and its highways."

Hearing his words, the titans in their savage fury began to wrap the tail of Hanuman in cotton rags and thus swathed, that colossal monkey increased in size like unto a fire in a forest fed by dry wood. And having soaked the cloths in oil, the titans set them on fire and Hanuman, filled with rage and indignation, his face shining like the rising sun, lashed out at them with his blazing tail, whereupon that lion among monkeys was secured more tightly by the assembled demons. Accompanied by women, children and the aged, those rangers of the night gathered to enjoy the spectacle and the valiant Hanuman, who was bound, began to reflect on the matter and thought to himself:—

"Assuredly, though fettered, the titans are not able to prevent me from breaking my bonds and leaping amongst them creating fresh carnage, still it is in the interest of my master that I have taken this journey and it is under the orders of their lord that they have bound me, I shall not therefore resist them. From the point of view of stature, I am well able to engage all these titans in battle but for love of Rama I shall suffer this outrage. I shall survey Lanka anew, since during the night I was not able to view the fortifications, it proving too difficult. The night having passed I shall behold Lanka by day. Let them bind me anew; even though they inflict pain on me by the burning of my tail, my mind is not troubled."

Meanwhile the titans seizing hold of that great monkey of formidable aspect who was full of courage, an elephant among apes, exultant, advanced joyfully, proclaiming his misdeeds with conches and trumpets and those demons of cruel exploits dragged Hanuman, the conqueror of his foes, through the city, he willingly submitting himself to them.

Thereupon, passing through the titan's capital, that great monkey surveyed those marvellous palaces, covered highways, well laid out squares and streets flanked with mansions and cross roads, lanes and alleys, as also the interior of the dwellings and on the terraces and roads and along the royal highways all those titans cried out: "This is a spy!"

Then those hideous titan women informed the divine Sita of these unpleasant tidings, saying:—"O Sita, that red-faced monkey, who had converse with thee, is being led through the

streets, his tail ablaze." And hearing those words, Vaidehi remembering her own abduction, overcome with grief, having duly purified herself, called upon that God who nourishes himself on the sacrifices and urgently implored him to show his favour to that mighty monkey. And the large-eyed Sita, standing before the fire said: "If I am possessed of true devotion to my lord and have practised penances, if I have been a chaste wife, then do thou prove cool to this monkey. If the sagacious Rama still has any compassion for me, if my merits are not wholly exhausted, then do not burn Hanuman."

Whereupon Anala of ardent rays, as if communicating with that lady, whose eyes were like a doe's, blazed up and, at the same time, Hanuman's sire, in order to please that goddess, blew on that flaming tail with ice-cold breath and the monkey, whose tail was ablaze, thought:—"How is it that this fire, blazing up, does not burn me? I see a great flame, yet feel no pain, even as if the snow had fallen upon it. In sooth this is a wonder due to Rama's power which I witnessed when crossing the main. If the ocean and the virtuous Mainaka acted in such a manner, in reverence for him, what will the God of Fire not do? It is on account of Sita's virtue, Raghava's power and my sire's affection for me, that Pavaka does not burn me."

Thereafter that elephant among monkeys reflected:— "Why should a warrior such as I, suffer himself to be bound by these vile titans? It is meet that I should manifest my valour and avenge myself!"

Then that impetuous and mighty monkey snapped his bonds and springing into the air uttered a shout and that offspring of the Wind-god reached the gate of the city which was as high as the peak of a mountain and where no titans were to be found. Then, he who resembled a great hill, assumed a diminutive form and casting off his fetters became free, whereupon he expanded to the size of a mountain once more. Looking about him he observed an iron bar lying at the gate and the long-armed Maruti, seizing hold of that weapon, employed it for slaying the guards. Having destroyed them, in his ardour, that one of exceeding prowess, with the burning plume of his tail resembling an aureole, looking like the glorious sun surrounded by rays, cast his eyes over Lanka.

CHAPTER 54

He sets fire to Lanka

SURVEYING Lanka, that monkey, having attained his purpose, began to consider what he should do further and reflected in himself:—" What more remains for me to do to afflict the titans? The grove laid waste, those vile titans slain, a part of the army destroyed, nothing is left for me but to demolish their citadel. With their fort destroyed, it were easy to bring my labours to an end; with a little effort I can complete my task and obtain the price of my trouble. The Bearer of Sacrificial Offerings that flames on my tail must be propitiated by me, I shall therefore burn up these excellent buildings."

Thereat, with his tail in flames, which lent him the appearance of a cloud charged with lightning, that great monkey began to range the roofs of the dwellings of Lanka. Glancing round, passing from mansion to mansion, with a calm mind he encircled those stately edifices and gardens and leaping impetuously towards the palace of Prahasta, that one of exceeding prowess in strength resembling the wind, set fire to it. Thereafter the mighty Hanuman bounded to the mansion of Mahaparshwa lighting a fire equal to that at the end of the world. Then that monkey of immense energy leapt on the residence of Vajradanshtra and on those belonging to Shuka and the intelligent Sarana. In the same way that leader of monkeys burnt down the habitations of Indrajita, Jambumalin and Sumali and those of the titans Rashmiketu, Suryashatru, Hrasvakarna, Damshtra, Romasha, Yuddhonmatta, Matta, Dwajagriva, Vidyujjihva and Hastimukha and the dwellings of Karala, Vishala, Shonitaksha, Kumbhakarna, Maharaksha, those of Narantaka, Kumbha, Nikumbha and the magnanimous Yajnashatru and Brahmashatru.

That mighty bull among monkeys thereafter set fire to the accumulated treasure of those affluent titans and having passed

over the other dwellings that powerful and auspicious one approached the residence of the King of Titans. Then the virtuous Hanuman, emitting loud cries, resembling a cloud at the dissolution of the world, with the tip of his blazing tail set fire to that foremost of buildings decorated with every variety of gems resembling Mount Meru or Mandara, enriched with sumptuous decoration.

Fanned by the wind, the flames spread everywhere, casting livid gleams like the Fires of Time and those palaces, enriched with gold, decorated with pearls and gems, richly bejewelled, toppled to earth, crumbling to dust like the mansions of the Celestials, who have fallen from heaven their merit exhausted. Then there arose a mighty uproar among the titans, who fled in all directions unable to preserve their dwellings, bereft of their treasure, crying out:—" Verily it is the God of Fire himself in the form of a monkey! "

Some of the titan women with babies at their breasts ran shrieking from their homes and some, enveloped in flames, their hair in disorder, fell from the high balconies like flashes of lightning in the sky. And Hanuman saw various metals flowing in a molten mass, mixed with diamonds, coral, emeralds, pearls and silver, streaming from the palaces and, as fire is not sated in consuming wood and straw, neither did Hanuman weary of slaying those leaders of titans nor the earth from receiving their corpses. As Rudra consumed the Demon Tripura so did that impetuous and mighty monkey burn up Lanka and, from the summit of that mountain where Lanka stood, that dreadful conflagration kindled by the intrepid Hanuman shot forth in tongues of flame. Resembling the fires at the destruction of the world, the smokeless conflagration, lit by Maruta blazed up to the skies aided by the wind, feeding on the dwellings of the titans and their bodies like sacrificial offerings and, with the fierce ardour of a million suns, it consumed Lanka wholly as with increasing volume the fire cleaves the mundane Egg with a sound resembling innumerable thunderclaps. That fire of incalculable fury, rising into the sky, with its flames resembling Kimshuka flowers, its clouds of smoke like unto the blue lotus, looked exceedingly beautiful.

" Verily this is the God who bears the thunderbolt, Mahendra, the Chief of the Thirty or Yama or Varuna or Anila. This is no monkey but the God of Death himself who has come! Or perchance it is a manifestation of Brahma's wrath, the four-faced God who, in the form of a monkey has come hither to destroy the titans or is it the supreme power of Vishnu, unimaginable, unutterable, infinite and unsurpassed, which, by his Maya, has assumed the form of a monkey ? "

Thus did the chief titans speak, being assembled and, seeing their city suddenly consumed by fire with its inhabitants, horses, chariots, flocks of birds, beasts and trees they began to lament, crying :—" O My Father, O My beloved Son, O My dear One, O My Friend ! Woe, alas ! O My Lord, our spiritual merit is exhausted ! " Thus amidst, a frightful clamour, did the titans cry aloud, and Lanka, encircled with flames, her heroes slain, her warriors succumbing to the swift wrath of Hanuman, appeared to have fallen under a curse. In the midst of the tumult Hanuman with pride, surveyed Lanka bearing the marks of that violent blaze and its terror-stricken demons as Swyambhu surveys the final destruction of the world.

Having demolished the grove planted with rare trees and slain those powerful titans in combat and burned that city filled with splendid palaces, that monkey born of Pavana rested.

Having dispatched those titans in great numbers, destroyed the dense woods and spread the fire amongst the titan dwellings, the illustrious Hanuman became absorbed in the thought of Rama.

Thereupon all the Celestials lauded that prince among monkey warriors endowed with immense energy, equal to Maruta in swiftness, that sagacious and excellent son of Vayu. And all the Gods, the foremost of the Ascetics, the Gandharvas, Vidyadharas, Pannagas and Bhutas experienced an exceeding and indescribable joy.

And having devastated the forest, slain the titans in conflict and burnt the great city of Lanka, that mighty monkey, seated on the roof of the foremost of buildings, spreading the rays of his flaming tail like a aureole, resembled the sun encircled with

a nimbus. Then having consumed the city of Lanka, that great monkey quenched the fire of his tail in the sea.

Beholding Lanka consumed by fire, the Gods, Gandharvas, Siddhas and great ascetics were struck with amazement.

CHAPTER 55

Hanuman's Anxiety concerning Sita

SEEING Lanka consumed by fire and that city with its terror-stricken titans filled with tumult, the monkey Hanuman became thoughtful and a great anxiety invaded his mind.

He reflected :—" In burning Lanka, I have without doubt done something reprehensible ! Blessed are those great souls, who, in their wisdom extinguish the anger born within them as a fire is quenched by water. What evil is not committed by those who give way to wrath ? In anger one may even slay one's spiritual preceptor ; nor does he who is enraged, refrain from affronting virtuous men. He who gives way to wrath is unable to discriminate as to when it is fitting to speak or when to be silent ; there is no iniquity that cannot be perpetrated by him. He is truly said to be a man, who, controlling himself, subdues the anger rising within him as a snake casts off its slough. Woe is me, wretched and shameless doer of evil that I am, who, forgetting Sita, have slain my lord by fire. Should that noble daughter of Janaka have perished in this conflagration, which has wholly consumed the city of Lanka, I have frustrated the purpose of my master ; Sita having been burnt, I have marred my lord's design. To burn down Lanka is a trifling occurrence, but suffering myself to be overcome by anger I have cut at the very root of my mission. Assuredly Janaki has perished for there remains no corner of Lanka that has not been laid waste, the entire city lies in ashes. Since I have sacrified everything through my lack of understanding, I shall yield up my life this instant, either I shall throw myself into the fire or into the jaws of Vadava, or give my body to the denizens of the deep. Living, I am not able to face the King of the Monkeys or those two

tigers among men, having marred their purpose. Through my culpable anger I have manifested my undisciplined simian nature to the Three Worlds. Woe to the unbridled passion, uncurbed and unrestrained, under which I failed to protect Sita when it was in my power to do so. She, having perished, those two heroes will die also and on their ceasing to exist, Sugriva will yield up his life with all his kinsfolk. On hearing these tidings, how shall the virtuous Bharata, devoted to his brother or Shatrughna, survive? Then on the extinction of the illustrious race of Ikshwaku, their subjects will be overcome with grief.

"Unfortunate am I, whose merits have been annulled through being false to the ties of duty and advantage, suffering myself to be dominated by a corrupting passion, thus becoming the destroyer of creatures!"

Immersed in these melancholy reflections, Hanuman recollected certain auspicious signs that he had previously observed and said to himself:—

"Is it possible that that Lovely One, protected by her own spiritual merit, has happily escaped death? Fire cannot burn fire! Nay, Pavaka would not dare to approach that virtuous one, preserved by her own purity, who is the consort of one of immeasurable glory. That Bearer of Sacrificial Offerings has not burned me owing to Rama's power and the virtue of Vaidehi. How should she therefore, the object of worship of those three brothers, Bharata and the others and the beloved of Rama's heart, perish? Since it is the nature of fire to burn, he who reigns invincible as master everywhere yet who has not burned my tail, why should he consume that exalted One?"

Thereafter Hanuman remembered with wonder how the Mainaka hill had appeared to him in the ocean and he reflected: "By virtue of her asceticism, sincerity and undeviating devotion to her lord, she is able to consume fire itself but it cannot consume her."

Pondering thus on the magnitude of the divine Sita's spiritual merit, Hanuman heard the high-souled Charanas conversing thus:—

"Assuredly Hanuman has accomplished a difficult feat in igniting a fierce and terrible fire in the dwellings of the titans.

The hosts of women, children and the aged are fleeing away and the tumult re-echoes as in a cavern; the city of Lanka with its towers, walls and gateways is wholly consumed but Janaki still lives, a great wonder!"

Such were the words, resembling ambrosia, which fell on Hanuman's ears and from that instant, happiness flooded his heart once more. On account of the auspicious portents, his own conclusions, the merits of Sita and the words of the saints, Hanuman was delighted beyond measure. Thereupon that monkey, having attained his end, knowing the princess to be safe, resolved to leave Lanka after seeing her once more.

CHAPTER 56

He takes leave of Sita

PAYING obeisance to Janaki seated at the foot of the Shimshapa tree, Hanuman said to her: "By the grace of heaven I find thee unharmed!"

Looking on him again and again as he stood ready to depart, Sita, inspired by conjugal affection, said to him:—

"If, O Child, thou judgest it opportune, then, O Irreproachable Friend, remain here in some hidden spot to-day; to-morrow, having rested, do thou set out. Thy proximity, O Monkey, will make me forget mine overwhelming grief awhile. Thou wilt go, O Great Monkey and it is doubtful whether I shall still be living on thy return, O Foremost of Monkeys! In thine absence my torments will increase and falling into one misfortune after another, I shall be consumed with grief and sorrow. Further, O Hero, this fear is ever present with me; how will the most valiant Sugriva or that host of bears and monkeys cross the impassable ocean or those two sons of men supported by those powerful monkeys? Three beings alone are able to bound over the deep, Vainateya, thou and Maruta.

"In the face of this insurmountable obstacle, in thy consummate experience dost thou see any possibility of success?

O Destroyer of Hostile Warriors, thou alone art competent to perform this task, thou shalt attain renown by thy prowess; yet, if Kakutstha, the scourge of his foes were able to lay Lanka waste with his forces and bear me away, it would be worthy of him. Therefore do that which will enable the magnanimous Rama to manifest his prowess in conformity with a warrior's nature."

Hearing these words full of loving solicitude, reason and significance, the valiant Hanuman answered :—

" O Noble Lady, that lord and foremost of monkeys, Sugriva, endowed with power, has resolved to deliver thee. Attended by thousands of billions of powerful monkeys, he will not delay in coming hither, O Vaidehi, and those foremost of men, the flower of the human race, Rama and Lakshmana, coming here, will afflict Lanka with their arrows. Having destroyed the titans and their adherents, the son of Raghu, O Exceedingly Fair One, shall bear thee away and bring thee to his capital. Take heart, therefore, O Gentle One and await that hour! Soon shalt thou see Rama strike down Ravana on the field of battle. The Lord of the Titans slain with his sons, ministers and people, thou shalt be re-united with Rama, as Rohini with the moon. Ere long Kakutstha will appear accompanied by the foremost of monkeys and bears and, triumphing in the fight, shall remove thy grief."

Having thus consoled Vaidehi, Hanuman, born of Maruta, prepared to depart, offering salutations to her and, having comforted her and displayed his surpassing strength by rendering that city desolate, having thwarted Ravana and exhibited his immeasurabke power, Hanuman, paying obeisance to Vaidehi, intent on returning, resolved to cross the ocean once more.

Then the repressor of his foes, that powerful monkey, eager to see his lord, ascended the foremost of mountains, Arishta, covered with dark groves of Padmaka trees, resembling a mantle which, with the clouds clinging to its sides, seemed to expand with joy under the sun's rays; the metals scattered here and there appeared to be its eyes and the solemn sound of its torrents resembled its voice chanting the Veda; the waterfalls, the singing of its song and the tall Devadaru trees caused

the mountain to resemble a giant with uplifted arms, the thundering of the torrents were its cries re-echoing round about and the autumnal woods agitated by the wind made it appear as if it trembled; as the breeze whistled through the reeds, it seemed to be piping while great and venomous serpents created the illusion of its hissing in anger. With its ravines shrouded in mist, investing it with a solemn air, as if it were deeply absorbed in contemplation and the clouds moving here and there on its slopes lending it the appearance of walking; with its peaks towering heavenwards, so that it appeared to be yawning, it was bristling with escarpments and filled with innumerable caves. Planted with Sala, Tala. Kharjura, Tamala, Karna and Vanisha trees with a myriad creepers laden with flowers and abounding in herds of deer and containing innumerable streams, with countless crags, rich in minerals, intersected by rills, frequented by Maharishis, Yakshas, Gandharvas, Kinneras and Uragas, impenetrable on account of the thorns and briars, its caves were filled with lions, and tigers and other beasts abounded there and that mountain was furnished with trees having delicious fruit and roots.

Then the foremost of monkeys, the son of Anila, ascended that mountain burning to behold Rama once more and, wherever he placed his foot on those enchanting slopes, the rocks crumbled and broke away with a thundering sound.

Having scaled the Indra of Mountains, that mighty monkey gathered up his strength, desirous of crossing from the southern to the northern shore of the salty sea and, reaching the summit, he beheld that formidable expanse of water inhabited by dreadful monsters. Then the son of Maruta, with the swiftness of the wind as it blows through space, leapt from the southern region to the northern shore and, pressed under foot by that monkey, the mountain giant re-echoing to the cries of countless denizens sank into the bosom of the earth with its peaks toppling and its trees overturned. Borne down by Hanuman's prodigious bounds, trees laden with blossom fell to the ground as if struck by Indra's thunderbolt and the dreadful roar of great lions lurking in the caverns rent the skies as they were crushed by the falling mountain. Vidyadharas, their raiment torn and their ornaments in disorder,

fled in terror from that place and large and powerful serpents, filled with poison, shooting out their tongues, lay in coiled heaps, their heads and necks crushed. Kinneras, Uragas, Gandharvas, Yakshas and Vidyadharas, deserting that mountain, returned to the celestial realm and that mighty hill, measuring forty miles in extent and thirty in height, was levelled to the earth with its trees and lofty summits

Then that monkey, desirous of crossing over the salty sea, whose shores were threatened by the tides, rose into the air.

CHAPTER 57

The Return of Hanuman

LIKE a winged mountain, with one impetuous bound, Hanuman sailed over the airy sea, whose serpents were the Yakshas and the full-blown lotuses; the Gandharvas the moon was the lily on those enchanting waters, the sun its waterfowl, Tishya and Shravana its swans and the clouds its reeds and moss; Purnavasu was the whale and Lohitanga the crocodile; Airavata the spacious island; Swati, its decoration in the form of a swan; the breezes were its billows and the rays of the moon its cool and peaceful waves.

Unwearyingly, Hanuman swallowing up that space adorned with the sun and stars, skimmed past the King of the Planets. Cleaving the clouds and crossing that ocean without fatigue, he beheld great masses of cloud, white, roseate, purple, blue, yellow and black, looking exceedingly beautiful and he, entering and re-emerging from them, looked like the moon, when it is lost to sight and becomes visible again. Coursing through those massed clouds in his white attire, that hero could at times be seen and again was hidden in the sky, like unto the moon. Borne through space, that son of the Wind constantly dispersed the groups of clouds, sailing on and on, emitting loud roars resembling thunder and, having slain the titans, rendered his name famous, laid the city of Lanka waste,

harassed Ravana, inflicted defeat on those mighty warriors and paid homage to Vaidehi, he was now returning full of glory, across the sea.

And that one endowed with prowess, paid homage to the foremost of mountains, Mainaka, as he sped on like an arrow loosed from the bowstring. Approaching from afar, he observed that lofty Mountain Mahendra, like a great cloud and that mighty monkey, having a lusty voice resembling thunder, filled the ten cardinal points with his roars.

Reaching the southern shore, eager to see his friends once again, he began to wave his tail to and fro and emit loud cries and as he proceeded in the path of Suparna, the clamour rent the skies and it appeared as if the firmament and the sun's disc were shattered.

Thereupon those mighty warriors on the northern shore of the ocean, anxiously awaiting the Wind-god's offspring, heard the sound created by the thighs of Hanuman proceeding at great speed, resembling clouds blown by the wind and those rangers of the woods, who had been dispirited, heard the roars of that monkey which were like unto thunder. Hearing that clamour raised by Hanuman, those monkeys who were eager to see their friend once again, were greatly excited and Jambavan, the foremost of the monkeys, his heart exultant, addressing them all, spoke thus :—

" Undoubtedly Hanuman has been wholly successful in his enterprise; if it were not so he would not have raised this clamour."

Thereupon the monkeys, hearing the violent movements of that magnanimous one, as also his shouts, highly delighted, leapt up and in their joy, bounding from rock to rock and from crest to crest, eager to behold Hanuman, climbed to the tops of the trees waving their clean apparel.

And the roaring of the mighty Hanuman, born of Maruta, resembled the wind whistling through a mountain gorge. Seeing that great ape, who, alighting, shone like a mass of clouds, all the monkeys stood before him with joined palms, whereupon that valiant monkey, high as a hill, leapt down on to the Mahendra Mountain covered with trees and, overflowing with felicity, he alighted on that lofty and enchanting

peak, like a winged hill, whose pinions have been clipt and who has fallen from the sky.

Then instantly all the monkeys with glad hearts began to gather round the magnanimous Hanuman, encircling him, their faces shining with joy, drawing near to him in the excess of their felicity. Then offering obeisance to him they brought roots and fruits to that greatest of monkeys, born of Maruta. In their delight, some emitted shouts of joy and the foremost of the monkeys brought branches of trees so that he might be seated.

Meanwhile that mighty ape, Hanuman, paid obeisance to his elders and the aged with Jambavan at their head, as well as Prince Angada. And honoured by them all, as he had merited to be and overwhelmed by courtesies, he informed them briefly :—" I have seen the Goddess ! " Then taking the hand of Bali's son, he sat down in the enchanting grove on the Mahendra Mountain and, questioned by them, he joyfully addressed those foremost of monkeys, saying :—

" In the midst of the Ashoka grove, I observed Janaki; that irreproachable one is guarded by dreadful titan women. That damsel is wearing a single plait of hair and constantly sighs for Rama's presence. She is faint on account of fasting, stained with dust, emaciated, and wears matted locks."

Those foremost of monkeys, hearing the words of Maruti : " I have seen her ", sweet as Amrita, intoxicated with joy began to shout and emitting cries of pleasure raised ululations. Some waved their tails to and fro, others raised them up lashing them or bounded to the summit and with delight touched the fortunate Hanuman, that chief of monkeys.

And when Hanuman had spoken, Angada, in the midst of those valiant monkeys, paid tribute to Hanuman in excellent words, saying :—

" For valour and courage thou hast no equal, O Monkey, since thou hast crossed the immense ocean and hast now returned. Thou alone hast given us back our lives, O Great One. By thy grace, our purpose accomplished, we can rejoin Raghava. O What devotion thou hast shown to thy master ! What prowess ! What endurance ! By the grace of heaven, thou hast seen the divine and glorious consort of Rama. By

the grace of heaven, Kakutstha will abandon the grief that Sita's absence has caused him!"

Thereafter, surrounding Angada, Hanuman and Jambavan, the monkeys full of joy brought large rocks and, seated thereon, eager to hear how he had crossed the main and seen Lanka, Sita and Ravana, they waited with joined palms, their eyes fixed on Maruti.

And the youthful Angada, surrounded by innumerable monkeys, resembled the Chief of the Gods enthroned in heaven amidst the myriad hosts.

When the glorious and renowned Hanuman with the illustrious Angada, who was adorned with bracelets were seated, that elevated and mighty peak shone with splendour.

CHAPTER 58

Hanuman recounts his Experiences

THEREAFTER, on the summit of Mount Mahendra, those monkeys, their eyes fixed on the mighty Hanuman were filled with delight and when all those high-souled and happy monkeys were seated, Jambavan, glad at heart, enquired of the great and fortunate offspring of the Wind concerning the success of his mission, saying :—

"How didst thou discover that noble lady; how doth she fare there; how doth that cruel Ten-headed One bear himself towards her? Do thou truthfully relate all this unto us, O Mighty Monkey!

"How wast thou able to trace the divine Sita? What did she reply to thine enquiries? Having learnt all, we can take counsel as to what should be done! Do thou tell us also what, on our return, we should say and what we should conceal, O Thou who art well able to subdue thyself!"

Thereupon, that messenger, his hair standing on end with joy on hearing these words, inclining his head in token of his reverence for Sita, answered :—

" In your presence I leapt from the summit of the Mahendra Mountain into space with a concentrated mind, desirous of reaching the southern shore of the sea. In my course, a formidable obstacle presented itself to my view and I beheld a great mountain having a golden peak, divine and splendid, which obstructed my path. Approaching the sun-like summit of that mighty mountain, reflecting: ' I will shatter this ', I struck it with my tail and that peak which shone like the sun, broke into a thousand fragments. Seeing its condition, that great mountain addressed me in sweet accents, bringing as it were refreshment to my soul, and said:

" ' Know me, O My Son, to be the brother of thy father Matarishvat, famed as Mainaka, dwelling in the deep. Formerly, all the larger mountains were furnished with wings and ranged over the earth causing devastation everywhere. Hearing of the conduct of those mountains, Mahendra, that blessed One, by whom Paka was chastised, with his thunderbolt severed the wings of those mountains by thousands but I was delivered by thine illustrious sire and that high-souled Wind-god cast me into the sea, the abode of Varuna. O Subduer of thy Foes, I am willing to render assistance to Raghava, Rama is the foremost among virtuous men and is as powerful as Mahendra himself '.

" Hearing the words of the magnanimous Mainaka, I confided my purpose to him and he gave me leave to depart. Then, counselling me to proceed, he vanished in his human form and in the shape of a mountain became submerged in the sea.

" For a long time I travelled onward with speed till I observed the divine Surasa, Mother of Serpents, in the midst of the ocean and that Goddess addressed me saying:—

" ' Thou art destined by the Celestials to be my food, O Best of Monkeys, I am about to devour thee since thou hast been assigned to me '.

" Hearing this, I, with humility, turning pale, made obeisance to her with joined palms and uttered these words:—

" ' Rama, the fortunate son of Dasaratha, the Scourge of his Foes, withdrew to the Dandaka Forest with his brother Lakshmana and Sita; his consort was borne away by the wicked

Ravana; I am proceeding to her on Rama's behest. In this matter thou shouldst assist Rama. Having seen Mithila's daughter as also her lord of imperishable exploits, I shall return and enter thy mouth, this I promise thee'.

"Thus accosted by me, Surasa, able to change her form at will, said: 'None is able to pass by me, this is the boon I have received'.

"Thus addressed by Surasa, I attained the magnitude of ten yojanas and then another ten, but her mouth assumed even greater proportions. Seeing her jaws thus dilated, I instantly assumed a tiny form measuring a thumb's size and quickly entered her mouth, emerging immediately, whereupon the divine Surasa, taking on her normal shape, said to me:—

"'O Best of Monkeys, O Dear One, go, accomplish thy mission and restore Vaidehi to the magnanimous Rama. Be thou blessed, O Mighty One! I am pleased with thee!'

"Then all beings praised me saying: 'Excellent! Excellent!' and I again leapt into the infinite blue like unto Garuda, when suddenly, without anything being visible, my shadow was held fast. Stayed in my course, I surveyed the ten cardinal points unable to discover who held me prisoner. Then the thought came to me: 'What is this obstacle that has risen in my path? I cannot discern its nature!' And as I looked down bewildered, I beheld a dreadful demon lying in the waves, thereupon that monster, laughing scornfully, addressed these inauspicious words to me, who though undaunted, remained motionless:—

"'Whither art thou bound, O Thou of gigantic form? Do thou become my food, who am hungry, and gratify this body deprived of sustenance for a long period.' Saying:—'Be it so' I expanded my body to more than the capacity of her mouth but she increased the size of her huge and dreadful jaws in order to swallow me nor could she comprehend that I was able to assume different shapes at will. In the twinkling of an eye, abandoning my vast size, I, extracting her heart, flew into the sky.

"Throwing up her arms, that cruel demon sank under the salty waves like a mountain, whereupon I heard the harmonious voices of those magnanimous beings stationed in the

air, saying :—' That dreadful demon Sinhika has been swiftly slain by Hanuman.'

" That monster destroyed, I recalled to mind the urgency of my mission, and the delay that had occurred in discharging it and, after traversing a great distance, I beheld the southern shore of the ocean and the mountain on which Lanka was situated. The sun having set, I penetrated the abode of the titans unnoticed by them and, as I did so, a woman resembling the clouds at the end of the world period rose before me, breaking into laughter. Striking that exceedingly dreadful form, having flames for her hair, who had sought to take my life, with my left fist I thrust her aside and entered there at dusk, whereupon that one, affrighted, addressed me saying :—

" I am the city of Lanka, O Warrior ! Vanquished have I been by thy prowess, thou shalt also triumph over all the titans !'

" Meanwhile I sought for Janaka's daughter all through the night, penetrating into Ravana's inner apartments, but did not find her there. Not finding Sita in Ravana's palace, I was submerged in a sea of sorrow and in the midst of my distress I saw an enchanting grove with a mansion surrounded by a lofty golden wall. Having scaled that enclosure I beheld a grove of Ashoka trees in the midst of which a great Shimshapa grew. Ascending it, I observed a thicket of golden aspens and hard by the Shimshapa tree, I beheld that supremely beautiful one, dark blue of hue, whose eyes resembled lotus petals, clad in a single piece of cloth. Emaciated with fasting, her hair soiled with dust, Sita, fixed in devotion to her lord, was surrounded by cruel and hideous titan women living on blood and flesh, as a doe encircled by tigresses. Wearing a single plait, absorbed in the thought of her lord, lying on the earth, her limbs wasted, she resembled a lotus at the advent of winter. Deprived by Ravana of the object of her desire, she had resolved to die.

" Beholding that lady, whose eyes resembled a doe's, the illustrious consort of Rama, I remained seated in the Shimshapa tree.

" Thereafter I heard a great clamour mixed with the jingling of girdles and anklets, issuing from the palace of Ravana and, exceedingly agitated, contracting my body, I concealed myself

like a bird in the thick foliage of the Shimshapa tree. Thereupon the mighty Ravana accompanied by his consorts came to the place where Sita was and, seeing the Lord of the Titans, Janaki of lovely hips, shrank into herself, concealing her breasts with her arms and, in great dread and extreme confusion, glancing here and there and finding no refuge, that unfortunate being was seized with violent trembling.

" Then Dashagriva, inclining his head, bowed to the feet of the princess, who was overcome with extreme grief and said to her :—

" ' O Fair One, do thou regard me with favour ! If, O Sita, through pride, thou dost refuse to honour me, at the end of two months I shall drink thy blood ! '

" Hearing these words spoken by the wicked Ravana, Janaki growing exceedingly wrath, answered with dignity :—

" ' O Vilest of Titans, having uttered such a speech to the consort of Rama of immeasurable prowess, to me, the daughter-in-law of Dasaratha of the Ikshwaku line, why has thy tongue not fallen out ? O Vile Wretch, great indeed was thy valour to bear me hence far from the illustrious Rama, in his absence ! Thou art not even worthy to be the slave of Raghava, that invincible, loyal, courageous and illustrious warrior ! '

" Thus addressed in harsh terms, Dashagriva blazed up with wrath like a fire on to which a brand has been cast and, rolling his eyes in rage, clenching his right fist he prepared to strike Mithila's daughter.

" Then all the titan women cried out : ' Hold ! Hold ! ' and from their midst, the wife of that evil wretch, the lovely Mandodari, ran towards him and with gentle words, inspired by the love she bore him, contrived to pacify him.

" She said :—' Thou whose valour is equal to Mahendra's, what need hast thou for Sita ? Divert thyself with me, who am in no way inferior to her or do thou disport thyself with the daughters of the Gods, the Gandharvas or Yakshas. What is Sita to thee ? '

" Thereafter, that company of women raised up that powerful Ranger of the Night and conducted him back to his residence.

" Ravana having departed, those titan women of hideous aspect, railed at Sita in harsh and cruel terms, but Janaki paid

no more heed to their speech than to a straw, and their taunts were lost on her; and those titan women, who fed on flesh, failing in their attempts, informed Ravana of Sita's unconquerable resolution, whilst others, tired of tormenting her, giving up hope, exhausted, lay down to rest.

"And while they slept, Sita, devoted to her lord, gave voice to bitter lamentation in the extremity of her distress.

"Thereafter, rising in their midst, Trijata spoke, saying:—

"'Devour me this instant, if you will, but do not lay hands on the dark-eyed Sita, daughter of Janaka, the virtuous daughter-in-law of King Dasaratha. In truth I have had a fearful dream, causing the hair to stand on end, presaging the destruction of the titans and the triumph of this one's lord. It is for us to seek the grace of Vaidehi, who alone I deem, can defend us from Raghava. Let us therefore relate this dream to her, for one who is the object of such a vision, being freed from her distress, will attain the height of felicity. By bowing low in submission, we shall earn the favour of Janaki, who alone can deliver us from this great peril!'

"Thereat that chaste and youthful woman, on hearing of the coming victory of her lord, rejoicing, said:—

"'If Trijata speak truly, then indeed will I protect you all.'

"Observing Sita's unfortunate plight, I became absorbed in thought and my mind was perturbed. Then I cast about as to how I might find some means of speaking to Janaki and I began to extol the race of Ikshwaku.

"Hearing the words I uttered embellished with the praises of those Rajarishis, that exalted lady, her eyes suffused with tears, enquired of me saying:—'Who art thou; how and on whose behest hast thou come hither? From whence comes thine attachment to Rama? It behoveth thee to relate all to me.'

"Listening to her speech, I made answer to her in this wise:—

"'O Goddess! Rama, thy consort, hath found an ally endowed with supreme prowess, named Sugriva, who is the redoubtable and powerful King of the Monkeys. Know me to be his servant, Hanuman, who has come hither to thee, dispatched by thy lord of imperishable exploits. O Illustrious

Lady, that highly effulgent son of Dasaratha, foremost of men, hath sent this ring as a token to thee. O Queen, what is thy behest? Shall I bring thee back to Rama and Lakshmana on the northern shore of the ocean?'

"Hearing this, Sita, the delight of Janaka, reflected within herself awhile and said:—

"'Suffer Raghava to destroy Ravana and himself carry me hence.' Inclining my head to that noble and irreproachable lady, I requested some token from her which might enhance the delight of Raghava, whereupon Sita said to me:—

"'Take this excellent jewel for which thou shalt be highly regarded by that One of mighty arms.'

"Thereupon, that princess of lovely limbs gave me a marvellous jewel and in a voice strangled with sobs, bade me farewell. I bowed to that daughter of a king with deep respect and, circumambulating her began to consider returning home, but she, having searched her heart, addressed me once again, saying:—

"'O Hanuman, do thou relate my story to Raghava in such wise that those two heroes, Rama and Lakshmana, will come here instantly accompanied by Sugriva, or else, having but two months to live, Kakutstha will see me no more, like one without a protector.'

"Hearing these dreadful words, a wave of anger surged over me and I instantly resolved on what I should do. Thereupon, expanding my body to the size of a mountain, burning to fight, I laid waste the grove. Then all the beasts and birds began to flee away in fear and those terrible titan women awoke and beheld the devastation. Observing me, they all assembled and instantly ran in haste to inform Ravana, saying:—

"'O Valiant Sovereign, this thine inviolable grove has been destroyed by a wretched monkey who sets thy prowess at nought. Slay that perverse creature instantly, who thus affronts thee, lest he escape!'

"On this, the King of the Titans, Ravana, sent out innumerable warriors called Kinkaras and eighty thousand of those titans, armed with spears and maces, were slain by me in the grove with an iron bar. Then a few, who survived, quickly went to Ravana to inform him of the destruction of his troops.

" Thereupon I resolved to destroy the marvellous palace with its monument and slew the guards stationed there. In my fury I laid this building, the ornament of Lanka, low, whereupon Ravana sent out the son of Prahasta, Jambumalin with a company of titans of grim and fearful aspect.

" With my formidable mace I slew that mighty and skilful warrior with his retinue and Ravana, the Lord of the Titans, on hearing this, dispatched the highly powerful sons of the ministers followed by a regiment of infantry but with my iron bar I sent them all to the abode of death.

" Learning that, despite their ardour, I had struck down the sons of his ministers on the field, Ravana quickly ordered five of his heroic commanders to set out at the head of their troops, but I slew them all, whereupon Dashagriva sent out his highly powerful son, Aksha, with countless titans, to engage me in combat. Then that youthful son of Mandodari, a skilful warrior sprang into the air and I seized him by the feet, whirling him round and throwing him on the earth.

" Thereat the ten-necked Ravana, full of ire, hearing of the downfall of Aksha, sent his second son Indrajit, full of courage and martial ardour, against me and I, rendering the prowess of all those titans ineffectual, experienced extreme delight. Nevertheless, that long-armed warrior in whom Ravana had supreme confidence, inflamed with wine, continued to fight at the head of his warriors.

" And he, realising that I was invincible and seeing his forces routed, made me captive by aid of the Brahma-weapon, whereupon the titans bound me with ropes and taking hold of me brought me before Ravana. Then that One of vicious soul entered into conversation with me and enquired of me regarding my coming to Lanka and why I had slain the titans, whereto I replied :—

" ' I have done all this for Sita ! To find her I came hither ! I am the son of Maruta, the monkey Hanuman ! Know me to be Rama's messenger and the minister of Sugriva. It is to carry out Rama's design that I stand before thee ! Hear me now O Lord of the Titans ! The King of the Monkeys offers thee salutations and enquires as to thy welfare, O Mighty Hero ! He has commissioned me to communicate this message

in words that are both fitting and in accord with duty, legitimate pleasure and profit.

" ' While sojourning on Rishyamuka, that mountain covered with trees, I entered into an alliance with Raghava, that great warrior, invincible in combat, and he spoke to me saying :— ' O King, my consort has been borne away by a titan ; it behoves thee to assist me in this matter ! ' Thereafter, in the presence of fire, the Lord, Raghava, who was accompanied by Lakshmana, allied himself to me in friendship, who had been deprived of my royal prerogatives by Bali.

" ' And he hath made me lord over all the monkeys, after slaying Bali in combat with a single arrow. It is therefore fitting that we should assist him by every means and by virtue of this contract I have despatched Hanuman unto thee as envoy. Do thou therefore speedily return Sita to Rama, ere those valiant monkeys overthrow thy forces. Who is not conversant with the monkeys' prowess, whose aid has been solicited even by the Gods themselves ? '

" Speaking thus to Ravana, he bent his furious glances on me as if he would consume me and that ruthless titan ordered me to be put to death, being unaware of my power.

" Meanwhile his high-souled brother Bibishana, endowed with great sagacity, interceded for me in the following wise ; saying : ' O Thou Foremost of the Titans, abandon thy resolve, which is not in accord with the royal code. The death of an envoy is not sanctioned by royal tradition, O Titan. A messenger simply communicates the mandate of his master ! O Thou of incomparable prowess, there is no warranty for his destructon, yet, if his guilt be considerable, he may be mutilated.'

" At these words of Bibishana, Ravana issued this command to the demons : ' Set fire to the monkey's tail ! '

" On this behest, those titans wrapped my tail in hemp and cotton rags and they, in well-wrought armour struck me with their clenched fists and sticks and set fire to my tail. Bound and fettered with ropes by the titans, I submitted to it, resolving to set fire to the city. Thus pinioned and enveloped in flames, those warriors, shouting, led me along the royal highway to the gates of the city. There, contracting my body I assumed a

diminutive form and casting off my bonds, I seized an iron bar and assailed those titans, thereafter with one bound vaulting the gate, I rapidly burnt down the whole city and its gates and towers with my flaming tail, resembling the fire that consumes all beings at the end of the world.

" Seeing Lanka in flames I reflected with anxiety that Janaki must without doubt have perished since there was no corner of the city that had not been reduced to ashes. Thinking thus, overcome with grief, I overheard the Charanas saying in auspicious accents :—

" ' Janaki has not perished in the flames ! ' and hearing these wonderful words, proclaimed by their enchanting voices, I regained my courage. I was thereafter reassured by many auspicious signs, that Janaki had been saved from the flames and though my tail was on fire, I had not been consumed ! My heart was filled with joy and the wind spread its delicious perfumes. By virtue of these propitious manifestations, by my confidence in Rama's prowess and in Sita and the words pronounced by the great sages, felicity filled my soul. Then, re-visiting Vaidehi once again, I took leave of her and, scaling the Mount Arishta, leapt in this direction in order to see you all once more. Following the path of the wind, sun, moon and the Siddhas and Gandharvas, I found you here.

" By the grace of Rama and your prowess, I have carried out Sugriva's charge to the uttermost. I have related all to you in detail and it now remains for you to accomplish what is still to be done."

CHAPTER 59

Hanuman appeals to the Monkeys to rescue Sita

HAVING completed his narrative, Hanuman, born of Maruta, added these significant words :—" Fruitful have been the endeavours of Rama and Sugriva ! Having witnessed Sita's constancy, I am happy at heart ! By the power of her penances, the most illustrious Sita is able to uphold the earth or consume it with her ire, O Monkeys. The power of Ravana also,

created by austerities, is great and it is because of this that he was not destroyed when he laid hands on Sita. Nay, the flame to which one reaches out is not so greatly to be feared as is Sita's wrath.

"It now behoveth all the mighty monkeys and others, with Jambavan at their head to take part in this expedition, the purpose of which is now known to you, in order to behold Vaidehi re-united with those two princes.

"Alone I was able to enter Lanka, inhabited by titans and have afflicted that city by my prowess, as also Ravana and his people. What more could I not do therefore with the courageous and powerful Plavagas, endowed with heroism and martial prowess, strong and eager for victory?

"I shall destroy Ravana with his entire army, his sons, brothers and followers in combat. I shall destroy all the titans and circumvent those invisible weapons and other missiles, bestowed on Indrajita by Brahma, Rudra, Vayu, Varuna, scattering them and slaying the titans; with your sanction my prowess will bring them under restraint. Hills and mountains torn up by me will I discharge continuously, which even the Gods themselves cannot withstand, how much less those rangers of the night? Were the sea to overflow or Mount Mandara move from its place, Jambavan will never be daunted by an enemy host in conflict. And that heroic monkey, the son of Bali, is alone able to destroy the entire host of Rakshasas. With the movement of his vigorous thighs, the powerful Nila could overthrow Mount Mandara itself, how much more the titans on the field of battle. Amongst the Celestials, the Titans, Yakshas, Gandharvas, serpents or birds, show me any who could withstand Dvivida? Nor do I know any who could resist those two sons of the Ashwins, endowed with supreme energy, the foremost of monkeys, in the arena.

"Single-handed I have laid Lanka low and, setting it on fire have reduced it to ashes. On every highway I proclaimed aloud: 'May Victory crown the invincible Rama and Lakshmana! May the King Sugriva, whose support is Raghava, prosper. I am the servant of the King of Koshala, the offspring of Pavana! I am Hanuman!' I have announced this everywhere.

"In the centre of the Ashoka grove of the vicious-souled Ravana, the virtuous Sita waits forlornly at the foot of the Shimshapa tree surrounded by titan women, emaciated with sorrow and suffering, resembling the orb of the moon bereft of its splendour in the midst of cloud. Spurning Ravana, whose powers have rendered him arrogant, Vaidehi, the daughter of Janaka of fair limbs, remains undeviatingly faithful to her lord. Wholly devoted to Rama, the lovely Vaidehi, thinks of him alone, as Poulomi, Purandara. Clad in a single garment, soiled with dust, I beheld her in the grove surrounded by titan women who were heaping insults upon her. Her hair, dressed in a single braid that unfortunate being was absorbed in the thought of her lord. Lying on the earth, pale as a lotus at the approach of winter, separated by Ravana from the object of her love, she had resolved to yield up her life.

"With difficulty I was able to re-kindle Sita's hopes by addressing that damsel, whose eyes resemble a doe's, and relating all to her. And she, hearing of the alliance between Rama and Sugriva became happy and, fixed in her devotion, her conjugal affection reached its zenith. Fortunate is that ten-necked demon that she has not destroyed him, due to the boon he received from Brahma ; but it is for Rama that the destruction of that monster is reserved.

"Already greatly reduced, Janaki grows frailer every day, in Rama's absence, as learning wanes that is prosecuted on the first day of the lunar fortnight.

"Thus liveth Sita worn out by grief! It is for you to take counsel as to what it is proper to do in the matter."

CHAPTER 60

Jambavan rejects Angada's Project

HEARING these words, the son of Bali, Angada, said:—

"The sons of the Ashwins are exceedingly powerful and proud of the boon conferred on them by the Grandsire of the World, who in order to honour the Ashwi rendered those two monkeys incapable of being slain by any. This unique privilege inflamed their pride and those two powerful warriors,

having overcome the mighty celestial host, drank up the nectar of immortality. These two, inflamed with ire, are able to destroy the entire city of Lanka with its horses, chariots and elephants, what of other monkeys? I myself am capable of destroying the city with its titans and the mighty Ravana! How much more so if I am accompanied by powerful warriors, masters of themselves, well-armed, skilful and desirous of victory?

"We have heard that the courageous son of Vayu alone set fire to Lanka. He has seen the divine Sita but has not brought her back. I deem it unfitting that warriors as renowned as you are acquaint Rama of this. There are none in leaping and in prowess, whose skill and bravery equal yours in the worlds of the Immortals or amongst the Daityas, O Foremost of Monkeys. Few have escaped the carnage wrought by Hanuman, therefore it only remains for us to slay Ravana and the rest of the titans and bring back the daughter of Janaka, placing her between Rama and Lakshmana! What need have we to trouble those other residents of Kishkindha? It is for us to proceed to Lanka and, having slain the titans, return to Rama, Lakshmana and Sugriva."

Such was the project of Angada, whereupon Jambavan, the foremost of monkeys, in his wisdom, cheerfully made answer in words fraught with good sense, saying:—

"O Great Monkey, O Thou of supreme understanding, we have received a mandate from the King of the Monkeys and the virtuous Rama to explore the southern region to its utmost confines, but we have not been commanded to bring back Sita nor would it find favour with that lion among monarchs, Rama, if we did so, for he, proud of his lineage, has vowed before all the leading monkeys that he will himself deliver her. How should his words be rendered null and void? What is the use of undertaking that which is not conducive to his pleasure? This display of our prowess will prove fruitless, O Foremost of Monkeys! Let us therefore return to where Rama, with Lakshmana and the illustrious Sugriva can be found and inform them of the result of our quest.

What thou hast proposed finds favour with us, O Prince, yet it is by adhering to Rama's design that thou shouldst look for success."

CHAPTER 61

The Devastation of Madhuvana

ALL the heroic monkeys headed by Angada and the great ape Hanuman highly approved Jambavan's words and, those foremost of monkeys led by the son of Vayu leaping down from the summit of the Mahendra Mountain, bounded forward. Resembling the mountains Meru and Mandara, they appeared like elephants maddened with ichor, covering the whole of space as it were with their shadow, their eyes fixed on the highly powerful Hanuman gifted with velocity, having control of his senses and honoured by the Siddhas. Resolved on bringing about the success of Rama's design, proud of the results obtained, desirous of communicating their auspicious tidings, all those virtuous inhabitants of the forest, eager to assist Rama and avid for combat, jumping and frisking, reached Madhuvana.

And they came to that celestial grove protected by Sugriva, planted with countless trees, enchanting to look upon, where none might enter. And Sugriva's maternal uncle, the mighty monkey Dadhimukha guarded that picturesque and spacious garden belonging to the Lord of Monkeys. Extremely anxious to partake of the fruits of that beautiful orchard, those tawny-coloured monkeys, greatly delighted, craved permission of the prince to taste the honey, yellow as they. Then he graciously allowed those venerable monkeys, headed by Jambavan, to drink of the honey.

Thereupon, under Angada's command, authorised by that youthful son of Bali, those monkeys ascended the trees, swarming with bees, feasting on the fruit and roots and, in an access of intoxication, began to frolic here and there.

Singing, laughing, dancing, bowing, declaiming, running, capering and clapping their hands, some supported others, some quarrelled and some talked at random. Some leapt from tree to tree, springing down from the highest branches,

some bounded into the air or chased each other round the trees from rock to rock, responding to each other's songs and laughter, groans and lamentations, exchanging blow for blow.

Then a general confusion arose amongst that host of monkeys and there were none who were not inebriated or inflamed with excitement.

Seeing the wood laid waste, the trees stripped of their leaves and flowers, Dadhimukha was filled with anger and sought to restrain them. But that heroic and elderly monkey, the protector of the wood, was in turn upbraided by those insolent monkeys whereupon he grew even more determined to defend the forest that was entrusted to his care against them. Thereafter he spoke to some in harsh terms without fear or forethought and struck others with the palm of his hands, approaching some threateningly and others with soothing words.

They, however, excited with liquor, restrained by Dadhimukha, began to ill-treat him brazenly without reflecting that the fault lay with them, scratching him with their nails, biting him with their teeth, assailing him with blows of their hands and feet, and knocking him senseless laid waste to the whole of Madhuvana.

CHAPTER 62

The Fight between Dadhimukha and the Intruders

THEN Hanuman said to those monkeys: " O Monkeys, gather honey undisturbed! I will drive away anyone who hinders you!"

Hearing these words, Angada, that prince of monkeys, gaily echoed his advice, saying: " Do you all drink honey. We should be guided by all that Hanuman does, who has accomplished his purpose; even if it be improper, I am in accord with it!"

Listening to Angada, those foremost of monkeys all cried out:—" Excellent! Excellent!", praising the prince again and again. Thereafter they surged into the Malin wood with the

violence of a torrent and, having penetrated into those orchards, they drove away the guards by force. Happy in the thought that Hanuman had discovered Maithili and having had tidings of her, with the consent of Angada they drank the honey and feasted on the fruits.

Hurling themselves on the guardians of that orchard who approached them in hundreds, they overwhelmed them with blows and beat them off. Collecting honeycombs, a drona in size with their hands, those monkeys, yellow as honey themselves, drank the nectar and threw away the combs; some in frolic pelted each other with wax or piling up the branches sat down under the trees; some, heavy with drink, heaped leaves on the earth and lay down exhausted whilst others, stimulated by the intoxicating nectar, reeling, struck out at their companions wildly. Singing at the top of their voices, some imitated the roar of lions and some whistled like birds, others, drunk with honey, slept on the ground; some roared with laughter or burst into tears, some babbled wildly whilst others tried to interpret their utterances.

Meanwhile the guards of the forest, the servants of Dadhimukha, set upon by those terrible monkeys, crushed between their knees, fled in all directions. Wrought up with fear, they approached Dadhimukha and said:—"Empowered by Hanuman, those terrible monkeys have, despite us, laid waste to Madhuvana and, crushed between their knees, we all but gave up our lives."

Highly incensed, Dadhimukha, beholding the destruction in the Madhu Wood, which had been entrusted to his guards, consoled his subordinates, saying:—"Proceed to that place and fall upon those insolent monkeys; I myself shall soon follow and drive away by force those who are drinking the honey."

Hearing the words of their master, those valiant monkeys returned to Madhuvana and Dadhimukha, in their midst, accompanied them with great speed, bearing huge trees. Arming themselves with rocks, trees and stones, all those monkeys, highly incensed, proceeded to where the Plavamgamas were to be found, where, biting their lips in anger, they remonstrated with them again and again, seeking to suppress them by force.

Then all those monkeys, headed by Hanuman, beholding Dadhimukha greatly enraged, drove him back with violence and, as the mighty Dadhimukha of huge arms advanced bearing a tree in his hands, the powerful Angada incensed, intercepted him with his hands and, beside himself with inebriation, without showing the least mercy, though he merited it being his great-uncle, threw him to the ground with violence. Then that monkey, his arms and thighs broken and his face mutilated, bathed in blood, fell senseless for a space, thereafter, disengaging himself with difficulty, that foremost of monkeys withdrew to a distance and addressed his attendants, saying :—

" Let us all proceed with haste to where the thick-necked Sugriva, resides with Rama. I shall relate all Prince Angada's misdeeds to him and filled with ire that Sovereign will punish all the monkeys. The enchanting Madhu Wood, enjoyed by his forefathers, inviolate even to the Gods, is greatly beloved by Sugriva and he will mete out heavy punishment to those perverse wretches avid for honey and will slay those who have disobeyed their sovereign, with their friends and kinsfolk. Then shall my wrath, which I am unable to restrain, be appeased."

Speaking thus to the guards of the forest, Dadhimukha, their leader, departed with them with all speed and in the twinkling of an eye, reached the place where that sagacious offspring of the Sun, Sugriva, was.

Beholding Rama, Lakshmana and Sugriva, that great and heroic monkey, Dadhimukha, descending from the sky, alighted on the ground and with a sorrowful mien placing his joined palms to his forehead, touched Sugriva's feet.

CHAPTER 63

Dadhimukha relates how Madhuvana has been laid waste

SEEING that monkey prostrating himself, his forehead touching the earth, Sugriva, his heart moved, said to him :—

" Rise, Rise ! Why art thou lying prostrate at my feet ? Speak without fear ! Why hast thou come hither ? It behoveth

thee to make thy purpose plain. Is all well in Madhuvana? I wish to know everything, O Monkey!"

Thus reassured by the magnanimous Sugriva, the highly sagacious Dadhimukha rose and spoke as follows:—

"O Lord, that wood which neither thou nor Bali suffered to be enjoyed by the monkeys, has been laid waste by them! Seeking to drive them away with my attendants, they, disregarding me, continued to feast there merrily. I resisted their depredations with the assistance of my guards, but without showing any consideration for me, O Prince, those savages continued their orgy. These attendants of mine, assaulted by them, were driven from the wood and those countless powerful monkeys. their eyes inflamed with anger, broke their arms and feet and, crushing them between their thighs, flung them into the air. Thou art the living lord of these warriors who have been assaulted by those monkeys, who even now are pillaging Madhuvana and quaffing the honey."

While Sugriva listened to these tidings, the sagacious Lakshmana, Slayer of his Foes, enquired of him saying:—"O King, who is this monkey, the guard over the forest who has come to thee and what distress has led him to speak thus?"

Being thus addressed by the high-souled Lakshmana, Sugriva, skilled in converse, answered:—

"O Noble Lakshmana, this is Dadhimukha and this heroic monkey informs me that those war-like forest dwellers led by Angada have drunk the honey and eaten the fruits of the orchard. Such an escapade would not have been indulged in by those who had failed in their mission. Assuredly they have been successful since they have devastated the wood. It is for this reason that they have beaten with their knees those who have obstructed their revelry and have disregarded the valiant Dadhimukha whom I myself appointed as guardian to my orchard. In sooth, Hanuman and none other must have discovered the divine Sita. Hanuman alone could accomplish such a feat. The success of that enterprise depended on the sagacity of that foremost of monkeys endowed with courage, strength and learning. Where Jambavan and Angada are the leaders and Hanuman the moving spirit, success is assured. Assuredly Madhuvana has been laid

waste by those heroic monkeys led by Angada. Having explored the southern region, on their return this orchard excited their cupidity, whereupon they plundered it and drank the honey, assaulting the guards and beating them with their knees. This monkey, the gentle-voiced Dadhimukha, renowned for his prowess has come to communicate these tidings to me. O Mighty Saumitri, undoubtedly Sita must have been found else these monkeys would never have destroyed the wood bestowed on us by the Gods."

Hearing these words pleasant to the ear falling from Sugriva's lips, the virtuous Lakshmana and Raghava were overcome with joy and the illustrious Sugriva, exultant on receiving these tidings from Dadhimukha, answered that guardian of the forest, saying :—

" Highly gratified am I that those warriors, being successful, have eaten the honey and fruit! One should bear with the arrogance of those who have been victorious. Return to the Madhu Wood immediately and send all those monkeys with Hanuman at their head, here! With these two descendants of Raghu, I wish to interrogate those deer of the branches without delay, who, with the boldness of lions have fulfilled their task, in order to learn if they have discovered Sita."

Beholding those two princes, their eyes dilated with joy, in the height of felicity, the King of the Monkeys, realising the success of his enterprise was near, experienced extreme satisfaction.

CHAPTER 64

Sugriva consoles Rama

THUS addressed by Sugriva, the monkey Dadhimukha cheerfully offered obeisance to him and gave salutations to Raghava and Lakshmana. Thereafter, having honoured Sugriva and those powerful sons of the House of Raghu, escorted by his attendants, he sprang into the air. Departing with the same speed by which he had come, he descended from the

sky and, alighting on the earth, entered the Madhu wood. There he beheld those foremost of monkeys, now sober, spending the hours happily, having relieved themselves, the outcome of drinking honey, and approaching them, that hero with joined palms addressed Angada in the following words :—

"O Noble Prince, do not harbour any ill-feeling towards the guards, who, enraged, sought to drive thee away by force. May peace attend thee! O Thou of great strength, do thou partake of the honey freely which is thine by right, since thou art the heir-apparent and owner of the wood. It behoveth thee to pardon us for our wrath, arising out of ignorance! Like unto thy sire formerly and Sugriva, so art thou Lord of the monkey host! O Irreproachable Prince, I have related all unto thine uncle, who, hearing of the presence of the monkeys here, of thine arrival and also of the devastation of the forest, was not the least incensed, rather was he gratified. Highly pleased, thy paternal uncle, Sugriva, King of the Monkeys, said: 'Send them all here without delay!'"

Hearing those words of Dadhimukha, Angada, Prince of the Monkeys, skilled in speech, addressed all his companions, saying :—

"O You Leaders of the Monkey Host, undoubtedly all these events have been related to Rama. This may be inferred by Dadhimukha's tidings. It does not behove us to linger here further, our mission having been accomplished, O Slayers of your Foes! You have all drunk honey in full measure, O Heroic Forest Dwellers, nothing remains for us but to rejoin Sugriva. Whatever all of you counsel me to do, I shall put into effect. I am your servant and, though the heir-apparent, it is not for me to issue orders to you. You have all accomplished your task; it would therefore be unfitting for me to treat you arbitrarily."

Hearing these admirable words of Angada, those monkeys, full of delight, spoke thus :—

"Who, of thy status, O Foremost of Monkeys, would speak thus? Drunk with power, each says: 'I am the leader!' None but thee would utter words of such felicity. Thine humility augurs well for us. We are all ready to return to

Sugriva the King of the Monkeys without delay, but without thy word of command none among us is able to advance a single step."

On this, Angada answered them, saying:—" It is well, let us go!", whereupon all those warriors sprang into the air and the space was entirely filled as if by stones shot from a mortar.

Preceded by Angada, who was followed by Hanuman, those Plavamgamas bounded tempestuously into the air with a great clamour, like clouds driven before the wind.

Angada having arrived near to Sugriva, the King of the Monkeys addressd the lotus-eyed Rama, who was consumed with grief, and said:—

" Be of good courage! Rest assured the divine Sita has been found! These monkeys would not have returned otherwise, the time fixed by me being already past; I infer this from Angada's joy! Had the long-armed Angada, the foremost of monkeys not been successful, he would not have come back to me. If they had not succeeded in their enterprise, after such an escapade, that youthful prince, his mind troubled, would have appeared dejected. Without having seen the daughter of Janaka, they would not have dared to destroy Madhuvana which was obtained from my forbears or attacked that venerable monkey who guards it. O Noble Son of Kaushalya, O Thou fixed in thy vow and faithful to thine obligations, in sooth Hanuman and none else has discovered Sita. No other is qualified to encompass this end. O Thou, the foremost of the virtuous, the means to success are intelligence, resolution, valour and knowledge and Hanuman is endowed with all these. Where Jambavan with Angada leads and Hanuman directs the work, there can be but one outcome. O Thou of immeasurable prowess, have no anxiety! Those dwellers of the wood, having reached the height of insolence, would not have entered into an escapade of this kind had they failed in their mission. They have laid waste Madhuvana and taken the honey, I infer therefore that they have been successful."

At that instant, cries of " Kilakila " resounded in the sky from those inhabitants of the woods, who, proud of Hanuman's

exploit, were proceeding towards Kishkindha, thus proclaiming their trumph.

Hearing that tremendous clamour, the King of the Monkeys, curling and uncurling his tail, became greatly excited, whilst those monkeys, eager to see Rama, with Angada at their head and Hanuman before them, drunk with joy, alighted from the sky in front of their sovereign and Raghava.

Thereafter the mighty-armed Hanuman, inclining his head in salutations, informed Rama of Sita's physical and spiritual well-being. And hearing from Hanuman the auspicious words sweet as Amrita: " I have seen Sita ", the joy of Rama and Lakshmana was extreme and Lakshmana gazed on Sugriva, who had placed the matter in the hands of the son of Pavana, with profound respect, whilst Raghava, the destroyer of his foes, in extreme felicity looked on Hanuman with veneration.

CHAPTER 65

Hanuman tells Rama of his Meeting with Sita

HAVING reached the Mount Prasravana with its many woods, Hanuman paid obeisance to the mighty Rama and Lakshmana. Preceded by the heir-apparent, Angada and bowing to Sugriva and the monkeys, he began to recount the story of Sita and her confinement in Ravana's harem, of the threats of the female titans, of her unflinching devotion to Rama and the time fixed for her execution. All this did the monkey relate in Rama's presence.

And hearing of Vaidehi's well-being, Rama said:—" O Monkeys, where is the illustrious Sita to be found and what are her feelings towards me? Do ye relate everything unto me! "

Hearing Rama's words, the monkeys requested Hanuman, conversant with the matter, to describe all in detail. And he, versed in the art of speech, acquiescing in their desire, inclining his head in salutation to the divine Sita, turning to the south described his meeting with her and bestowed on Rama

the heavenly jewel, blazing in its own effulgence; then the son of Maruta offered obeisance to him and said:—

"Anxious to behold Sita, I crossed the ocean four hundred miles in extent and after a time reached Lanka, that city belonging to the wicked Ravana which is situated on the southern shore of the sea. There I beheld Sita in the inner apartments of Ravana and there she dwells, O Rama, centring all her thoughts on thee. I observed her reviled by hideous titan women who are guarding her in the grove and that noble lady, accustomed by thee to felicity, is now stricken with grief in thine absence, O Hero. Imprisoned in Ravana's inner apartments under the strict surveillance of those female demons, wearing a single plait, forlorn, that unfortunate being is absorbed in the thought of thee! Lying on the earth, emaciated, resembling a lotus on the approach of winter, spurning Ravana, she is resolved to yield up her life.

"O Kakutstha, O Guileless Prince, with considerable difficulty I discovered that princess of whom thou art in some sort the very soul and, narrating the glories of the Ikshwaku Race, I succeeded in gaining her confidence, whereupon I told her all.

"Hearing of the alliance between thee and King Sugriva, she was greatly delighted and she remains constant to thee in faith and love. O Foremost of Men, it was in this condition that I discovered her engaged in severe penances with her heart fixed on thee. Bestowing this jewel upon me, she requested me to relate to thee what happened on Chittrakuta concerning the crow, O Sagacious One and, addressing me thus, she said:—

"'O Son of Vayu, do thou describe all that thou hast seen here to Rama and present him with this jewel, which has been preserved by me with care. Do thou remind him of the mark traced with red powder on my countenance! Say:— 'O Sinless One, seeing this unique pearl formed by the waters that I send to thee, meseems I see thee before me and I rejoice in the midst of my distress. O Son of Dasaratha, I shall live but for a month, after which, being in the power of the titans, I shall die!'"

"Such were the words addressed to me by Sita of emaciated limbs, whose eyes resemble a doe's, imprisoned in Ravana's

apartments. I have related all faithfully to thee, O Raghava, now take counsel in order to bridge the ocean."

Seeing those two princes filled with renewed hope, the son of Vayu having presented the jewel as a token of recognition to Raghava, described everything to him from beginning to end.

CHAPTER 66

Rama's Grief

AT these words of Hanuman, Rama, born of Dasaratha, pressing the jewel to his heart, wept with Lakshmana. And beholding that marvellous gem, Raghava, stricken with grief, his eyes suffused with tears, said to Sugriva:—

" As milk flows from the udders of a cow on beholding its calf, so does my heart brim over on beholding this jewel! This pearl was conferred on Sita by my father-in-law on the occasion of our nuptuals and she wore it on her brow, thus enhancing her beauty. Obtained from the waters and reverenced by the Gods, it was conferred on Janaka by the sagacious Shakra, gratified by his adoration at a sacrifice.

" Seeing this magnificent gem, I recall the presence of my sire and my father-in-law, the King of Videha. This lovely ornament appeared beautiful on the forehead of my beloved and seeing it, it seems as if she herself were present here· As if sprinkling water on one who has lost consciousness, do thou relate to me what Vaidehi hath said, again and again, O Friend! What could be more poignant, O Saumitri, than seeing this pearl obtained from the waters, without Vaidehi? If she survive one month more, she will live long, but it is hard for me to exist an instant without Sita! Do thou lead me to where thou hast seen my beloved; after hearing these tidings, I cannot brook a moment's delay. How can that lady of lovely hips, who was ever timorous, endure life amidst those grim and fearful demons? As the autumnal moon, enveloped in cloud is unable to shine forth, so Sita's countenance is no longer resplendent. O Hanuman, do thou relate

unto me again and again what Sita said to thee. These words will revive me as the sick are cured by medicine. O Hanuman, what did my gentle, sweet-spoken and beautiful lady, who is separated from me, say to thee? How is that daughter of Janaka able to survive in her dire misfortune?"

CHAPTER 67

Hanuman describes his Interview with Sita

BEING thus addressed by the high-souled Raghava, Hanuman began to relate all that Sita had said to him:—

"O Lion among Men, in order to give credence to my report, the divine Sita described what took place on Mount Chittrakuta. Sleeping happily at thy side, Janaki one day was the first to wake, when suddenly a crow wounded her breast with its beak. O Rama, thou wert then asleep on Sita's lap and that crow again attacked her, pecking her cruelly, and, being bathed in blood and suffering, she did arouse thee. O Slayer of thy foes, seeing her breast wounded, thou, like an angry serpent didst enquire, saying:—'Who, O Timid One, hath with his claws wounded thee? Who hath dared to play with a five-headed snake?' Then, looking here and there, thou didst perceive the crow with its talons sharp and bloody standing before thee. And that foremost of birds was Indra's son, who with the speed of the wind disappeared into the earth. Then thou, O Mighty-armed One, didst roll thine eyes furiously and resolve to destroy that crow. Taking a tuft of Kusha grass from where thou hadst lain, pronouncing the Brahma-mantra, thou didst hurl the blade that blazed up like the fire at the dissolution of the world at the bird and that flaming grass followed in its wake.

"Forsaken by the Gods, who were terrified, that crow traversed the Three Worlds without finding a protector and returned to thee, O Subduer of thy foes, seeking refuge in thee and falling on the earth before thee. Thereupon, O Kakutstha,

thou in thy compassion didst pardon it, albeit it merited death. But thinking it improper that the purpose of the weapon should be rendered void, thou didst destroy the right eye of that crow, O Raghava. Then paying homage to thee and to King Dasaratha, that bird, thus delivered, returned to its abode.

" Sita said :—' O Raghava, thou art the foremost of those skilled in weapons, mighty and full of integrity, why dost thou not discharge thy shafts against the titans ? Neither the Gods, Gandharvas, Asuras or Maruta can withstand thee in battle. If thou in thy magnanimity hast any regard for me, then with thy well-directed shafts destroy Ravana without delay. Under the behest of his brother, why does not Lakshmana, the scourge of his foes and the foremost of men, fly to my defence ?

" ' How is it that those two mighty lions among men, the equals of Vayu and Agni in valour, whom the Gods themselves are unable to overcome, have forgotten me ? Assuredly I have committed a great sin, since those two scourges of their foes, who are able to do so, do not unite to deliver me ! '

" To those plaintive and gentle words of the noble Vaidehi, I answered : ' O Illustrious Lady, Rama is sorely stricken on account of thine absence and seeing his brother a prey to sorrow, Lakshmana too is suffering, I swear it. Since I have found thee at last, the time for lamentation is past. In an instant thou shalt see the end of thy woes, O Lovely Princess. Those two sons of a king, the foremost of men and subduers of their foes, eager to see thee once more, will reduce Lanka to ashes. Having slain the cruel Ravana with his kinsfolk in battle, Raghava will take thee back to his capital, O Charming One ! O Irreproachable Lady, do thou bestow some token on me that is known to Rama and will bring him delight.'

" Thereat Sita, glancing round on every side, drew from her robe an excellent jewel which had fastened her locks and bestowed it on me, O Mighty One.

" Then I, inclining my head in salutation, took the gem into my hands and made ready to depart, O Beloved of the Raghu Race ! Whereupon, seeing me about to take my leave expanding my body, Sita, the beautiful and unfortunate daughter of Janaka, her face bathed in tears, addressed me in a voice

strangled with sobs and, in the intensity of distress at my departure, said to me :—

" ' Happy art thou, O Monkey, since thou shalt behold the mighty Rama whose eyes resemble lotuses and the long-armed Lakshmana, my illustrious brother-in-law ! '

" To these words of Maithili, I made answer :—' Climb on my back without delay, O Noble Lady, and this very day I will show thee Sugriva, Lakshmana and thy consort Rama, O Fortunate Dark-eyed Princess ! '

" Then that Goddess answered me, saying :—' It is not proper for me to climb on thy back of mine own accord, O Great Monkey ! Although before this I was touched by the demon, it was on account of my helplessness, subject as I was to destiny. Do thou thyself repair to where those two princes are ! ' After this she added :—

" ' O Hanuman, do thou greet those two lions among men with Sugriva and his ministers ! Do thou describe unto Rama and Lakshmana of immeasurable prowess the intensity of my despair and the insults heaped on me by the titans. May thy journey be prosperous, O Foremost of Monkeys ! '

" Thus did that illustrious princess speak to me in the midst of her grief. Reflecting on my narrative, have faith in the integrity of the virtuous Sita."

CHAPTER 68

He repeats his Words of Consolation to Sita

" O FOREMOST of Men, that Goddess then addressed me in the midst of her grief out of love for thee and solicitude on my account, saying :—

" ' Do thou repeat all this to the son of Dasaratha, so that he may come with all speed and, having slain Ravana in combat, take me hence. O Hero, O Subduer of thy foes, if it find approval with thee, rest concealed here in some secret spot for one more day to relieve thy fatigue and to-morrow thou canst make ready to depart ! O Hanuman, in thy com-

pany I am able to forget my sufferings awhile. O Thou gifted with great prowess, I shall await thy return but doubt if I shall be living then. Beholding thee no more, I shall be consumed with fear, unfortunate creature that I am, overwhelmed with affliction! Moreover I am filled with doubt regarding thy companions, the bears and monkeys and how in effect, they and those two princes will be able to cross the impassable ocean. O Irreproachable Warrior, there are only three creatures qualified to traverse the sea—Garuda, Vayu and thyself. In view of this insurmountable obstacle, what possibility of success dost thou see, O Thou foremost of those skilled in the art of converse? True it is, that thou art able to accomplish this work single-handed, O Subduer of thy foes, but such a manifestation of prowess would benefit thee alone. If Rama however, with his forces, slaying Ravana in fight, were to bring me back in triumph to his capital, it would redound to his glory. It would not be worthy of Raghava to capture me by stealth as did Ravana, who under a disguise bore me away from the forest. Truly it would prove a feat of signal excellence, worthy of him, if Kakutstha, the conqueror of his foes, should destroy Lanka and deliver me. Do thou so act that that high-souled hero may display his prowess!'

"Hearing these words, full of good sense, reasonable and affectionate, I replied for the last time:—

"'O Goddess, Sugriva, the Leader of the bears and monkeys, gifted with valour, has resolved to deliver thee. He hath under his command innumerable powerful and courageous monkeys gifted with prowess, who are as swift as thought, able to go upwards or downwards and to every side, whom nothing can impede nor may they be daunted by the hardest tasks. Moreover those great and powerful monkeys, endowed with vigour, have circled the earth again and again, coursing through the air. Sugriva has many monkeys equal to me and greater; none are inferior. If I am able to cross the sea, how much more these heroes? The great ones are never sent out on a mission but those of inferior merit only.

"O Lady, now abandon grief; in one bound those leaders of the monkey hosts will reach Lanka and these two lions

among men, like unto the sun and moon, will present themselves to thee, O Princess. Soon shalt thou see at Lanka's gate, Raghava, resembling a lion and Lakshmana, bow in hand. And thou shalt soon behold those monkey warriors, endowed with the strength of lions and tigers, whose weapons are their nails and teeth, resembling the lords of the elephants, hastening here without delay. Ere long thou shalt hear the roaring of those leaders of monkeys on the summit of the Mount Malaya, resembling the rumbling of clouds. Soon thou shalt see Raghava, the Slayer of His foes, returning from his exile in the forest, installed on the throne with thee in Ayodhya.'

" Thereafter the daughter of the King of Mithila, though profoundly afflicted by thine absence, was comforted by these auspicious words and experienced great peace."

END OF SUNDARA KANDA

GLOSSARY

(For Flowers, Trees and Weapons, see separate Glossaries)

A

ABHIJIT. The twenty-second Nakshatra q.v.
ABIKI. A sheep.
ACHAMANA. A purificatory rite at which water is taken in the palm of the hands and poured over the head and breast and the mouth rinsed. It also includes touching various parts of the body.
ACHARYA. A spiritual Preceptor.
ADAMBARA. A drum.
ADITI. Mother of the Gods, who represents space and infinity.
ADITYAS. Sun Gods or sons of Aditi.
AGARU. Agallochum, a species of sandal or Indian Aloe Exorcaria. Used as incense or for perfuming purposes.
AGASTYA. A great Rishi, the reputed author of several hymns in the Rig-Veda. This Sage, whose miraculous powers are described in the great classics, entertained Rama, Sita and Lakshmana in his hermitage during their exile.
AGNEYA. A mountain. Also the south-eastern quarter, of which Agni is Regent.
AGNI. The God of Fire.
AGNIHOTRA. The Fire Sacrifice.
AGRAHAYANA. A Feast similar to the Harvest Festival.
AHALYA. Wife of the Rishi Gautama, who was transformed into a rock by her husband's curse and ultimately restored by Rama to her natural state.
AIRAVATA. The sacred elephant that transports the God, Indra.
AJA. A king of the dynasty of Ikshwaku, father of Dasaratha.
AJAS. A class of hermits. See note on Ascetics.
AKAMPANA. The Titan who informed Ravana of the destruction of Janasthana and persuaded him to abduct Sita.
ALAKA. Kuvera's capital.
AMARAVATI. Indra's capital, also called Vitapavati.
AMBARISHA. A king whose story is told in Balakanda.
AMRITA. The " Nectar of Immortality " produced by the churning of the ocean by Gods and Demons.
ANANGA. Lit.: " Bodiless "—a name given to Kandarpa, the God of Love.
ANANTA. The thousand-headed serpent or Shesha on which the Lord Vishnu rests during the withdrawal of the worlds.

ANASUYA. Wife of the Rishi Atri.

ANDHAKA. A demon, son of the Sage Kashyapa and Diti—Andhaka was said to have a thousand arms and heads and was slain by Shiva.

ANGA. The kingdom ruled over by King Lompada, probably Bengal. A part or limb. An army may be divided into angas and in this context has been translated as divisions.

ANGADA. The son of Bali, a monkey warrior.

ANGARAKA. A female demon.

ANILA. The God of the Wind.

ANJALI. A salutation made with joined palms.

ANJANA. A nymph with whom the God of the Wind became enamoured and who subsequently gave birth to Hanuman.

ANSHUMAN. Son of Asamanjas. See Balakanda for his story.

ANTAKA. A name of Yama, the God of Death.

ANTIGAS. A measure implying the utmost number.

ANUHLADA. The son of Hiranya-kashipu, a Daitya and the father of Prahlada whose story is told in the Vishnu Purana. Hiranyakasipu was slain by Vishnu in his incarnation of Nrsingha, half man, half lion.

APSARA. "Ap" meaning water and "sara" to emerge from; the name means a water-sprite or nymph. The Apsaras were the wives of the Gandharvas.

ARANYA. A forest.

ARBUDHA. A number approximating to a hundred million.

ARGHYA. A traditional offering of water, milk, kusha grass, rice, Durva grass, sandalwood, flowers, etc.

ARISHTANEMI. A name of Garuda's meaning "The Felly of whose wheel is unhurt".

ARTHA. Dharma, Artha and Kama—duty, prosperity and legitimate pleasure, which are said to be the three ends of life.

ARTHA-SHASTRA. The science of moral and political government. The Artha Shastras are ancient Hindu treatises summarizing the main duties of man in the field of politics and economics, where the subjects are treated from the individual and not the universal point of view.

ARUNA. Brother of Garuda.

ARUNDHATI. Wife of the Rishi Vasishtha, a model of conjugal excellence. Also the morning star.

ARYAMANA. Chief of the Pittris or Ancestors.

ASAVA. Wine made of sugar and honey or the blossom of Bossia Latifiloia or, according to some, grapes.

ASCETICS. Sages who practised austerities, of which the following are specially cited :—

Ardrapatavasa. Those practicing silent prayer.

Asmakuttas. Those who lived in stone huts on uncooked food.

Dantolukhalis. Those who took raw food such as grain crushing it between their teeth.
Gatmasayyas. Those who slept on the ground without making a bed.
Marichipas. Those who lived by absorbing the rays of the sun or moon.
Pancagni. Those practising asceticism between five fires, i.e.: four fires and the sun above.
Patraharas. Those who lived on the leaves of trees.
Sampraksalas. Those said to be born of the water in which Brahma's feet were cleansed.
Vaikhanasas. Born from the nails of the Creator, Brahma.
Valakhilyas. Born from the body of Brahma.

ASHADHA. The month that covers part of June and July.

ASHOKA. One of King Dasaratha's counsellors. For the tree of this name see separate Glossary.

ASHRAMA. Hermitage or forest retreat.

ASHWAYUJ. The month September—October.

ASHWINS or ASHWINI-KUMARAS. Celestial horsemen, precursors of the dawn, twin offspring of the sun and patrons of medicine.

ASURA. A Demon or Titan, enemy of the Gods.

ASWAMEDHA. Horse sacrifice of Vedic times, performed only by kings.

ATHARVA VEDA. The fourth Veda.

ATIBALA. See Bala and Atibala.

ATODYAS. A musical instrument.

ATRI. One of the Seven Immortal Sages.

ATYARTHA SADAKA. One of King Dasaratha's counsellors.

AUM or OM. The sacred syllable, said to have been the first sound in creation. Its import can be studied in the Mandukya Upanishad.

AURVA. A great Rishi, the grandson of Bhrigu. His name is derived from "uru" or thigh as he was said to have been produced from his mother's thigh. His austerities alarmed the Gods and his anger against the warrior class, who had slain his forbears, was unparalleled. Eventually it was mitigated by the intervention of the Pittris and he cast the fire of his wrath into the sea, where it became a being with a horse's head named Haya-shira.

AYODHYA. The capital of Koshala, ruled over by King Dasaratha, possibly Oudh.

AYOMUKHA. A mountain.

AYOMUKHI. A female Titan or Demon.

AYURVEDA. The "Veda of Life". A work on medicine attributed to the Sage Dhanwantari who rose from the ocean when it was churned by Gods and Titans.

AYUTA. A number not to be counted, a myriad or sometimes said to be a thousand plus a hundred.

B

BAHADUR. A title of honour, conferred by Mohammedan kings, similar to a knighthood.

BALA and ATIBALA. The Science of Sacred Formulas, given to Rama by the Sage Vishwamitra.

BALI or VALI. King of the Monkeys, slain by Rama. His brother was Sugriva.

BALHIKAS or VALHIKAS. Bactrians or people of the North and West of India.

BHAGA. A Deity mentioned in the Vedas, who was an Aditya presiding over love and marriage. The name means "Wealthy Master", "Gracious Lord", "Bestower of Wealth".

BHAGIRATHA. A descendant of King Sagara, who by his penances brought the sacred river Gunga down to earth. A name of the river Gunga or Ganges, so called after the Sage Bhagiratha.

BHARADWAJA. A Sage who entertained Rama, Sita and Lakshmana in the forest and subsequently created a great feast for Bharata. See Balakanda. Many Vedic hymns are attributed to him.

BHARATA. The younger brother of Rama and son of Queen Kaikeyi.

BHARATVARSHA. Ancient India.

BHASA. A vulture or bird of prey.

BHASKARA. Father of Sugriva. A name of the Sun.

BHERIS. A kettledrum.

BHOGAVATI. The voluptuous subterranean capital of the Serpent Race also called Putkari.

BHRIGU. A Vedic Sage, said to be the son of Manu, the progenitor of mankind.

BHRINGARAJA. A shrike or a bee.

BHUR, BHUVAH, SWAH. The Lower, Middle and Upper Worlds.

BHUTAS. Ghosts, imps or goblins, malignant spirits.

BHUTI. The mother of the nymph Manu.

BIBISHANA or VIBISHANA. Brother of Ravana but a devotee of Rama, who conferred the Kingdom of Lanka on him after Ravana's death.

BISHAKA or VISHAKA. A devotee who constantly contemplates the Deity. Also one of the Nakshatras q.v.

BRAHMA. The creative aspect of Divinity, Shri Vishnu being the maintaining aspect and Shiva the destructive aspect.

BRAHMACHARI. Religious student living in the house of a spiritual teacher, having taken certain vows.

BRAHMACHARINI. The female equivalent of Brahmachari.

BRAHMACHARYA. Religious studentship, implying the taking of certain vows.

BRAHMA-JNANA. Knowledge of Brahman, Truth or the highest Reality.

BRAHMA-LOKA. The abode or region of Brahma.
BRAHMAN. The Absolute or highest Reality. Attributeless Being.
BRAHMAPUTRA. Son of Brahma.
BRAHMARSHI. A constellation said by some to be Shravana q.v.
BRATASURA, VRATASURA or VRITRA. A Titan slain by Indra.
BRIHASPATI or VRIHASPATI. The spiritual Preceptor of the Gods, also said to be the Regent of the planet Jupiter which is called by the same name.
BUDHA. The planet Mercury.

CAITYA. Tombstone, column, or pile of stones.
CAKRACARA. Lit.: Going in a circle. A class of heavenly beings.
CASTES. The four: Priest, Warrior, Merchant and those who serve these three.
CELIKA. Musical instrument.
CHAITARATHA or CHITARATHA. King of the Gandharvas q.v.
CHAKRATUNDA. A fish resembling a wheel in appearance.
CHAKRAVAKA. Brahmany duck or ruddy goose.
CHAMARA. Chowrie, a fan made of Yaks' tails, insignia of royalty.
CHAMARA. A Yak, Bos Grunniens, highly prized for its bushy tail.
CHANDALA. An outcaste.
CHANDRA. The moon.
CHARANAS. The Panegyrists of the Gods.
CHITRA. The planet Spica. The month Chitra or Chaitra is part of February and March.
CHITTRAKUTA. A sacred mountain where Rama and Sita dwelt while in exile. It is still a holy retreat.

DAITYAS. Titans.
DAKSHA. Son of Shri Brahma. His daughter Uma became Shiva's consort.
DAKSHINA. Traditional offering made after a sacred ceremony.
DANAVAS. A race of giants, enemies of the Gods.
DANDAKA. A vast forest lying between the rivers Godaveri and Narmada, the scene of Rama and Sita's exile.
DANU. A name of the Demon Kabandha q.v.
DASHAGRIVA. "The Ten-Necked One." A title of Ravana.
DASHANANA. "Ten-Faced One." A name of Ravana.
DASARATHA. King of Koshala, father of Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna.
DATYUHAKA. A small gallinule resembling a cuckoo.

DEVARISHI. See under Rishi.

DEVAS. The Gods or Shining Ones.

DEVI. A title given to Parvati q.v.

DHANADA. A name of Kuvera, the God of Wealth, "Giver of Wealth."

DHARA. Wife of the Sage Kashyapa.

DHARMA. Traditionally ordained course of conduct or duty. The Law of Righteousness. Dharma is personified in one of the Prajapatis, God of moral and religious duty. Also the four ends of life: Legitimate enjoyment, prosperity and duty, the fourth being the attainment of spiritual bliss.

DHARMABRIT. A Sage whom Rama encountered near the Lake of the Four Nymphs.

DHATAR or DHATRI. Creator, Author or Founder, a name given to Vishnu or Brahma and others.

DHRISHTI. One of the chief counsellors of King Dasaratha.

DHUMA. The God of smoke.

DHUMAKETU. A meteor, comet or falling star. The personified descending node.

DHUNDUMARA. Slayer of the Demon Dhundu, a title of the King Kuvalayashwa.

DILIPA. Father of the Sage Bharadwaja.

DINDIMA. A musical instrument.

DITI. Daughter of Daksha, wife of Kashyapa, mother of the Daityas.

DIVISIONS OF TIME, the Three. Past, present and future.

DRONA. A measure approximating to 92 lbs.

DUKULA. Woven silk or very fine cloth made of the inner bark of the plant of the same name.

DUNDHUBI. A giant slain by Bali. Also a kettledrum.

DUSHANA. A General of Khara's army, slain by Rama.

DYUMATSENA. Prince of S'abra, father of Satyavanta.

EKASHALYA or EKACALYA. An aquatic creature. The word means "having a tip or point". Possibly a shark, or swordfish.

GADHI. Father of the Sage Vishwamitra, the son of King Kushanaba, hence the patronymic Kaushika.

GANDHAMANDANA. A general of the monkey army, killed by Indrajita, also the name of a mountain, "The Mount of Intoxicating Fragrance".

GANDHARVAS. Celestial Musicians.

GANGES. The sacred river Gunga, also known under many other names such as Bhagirathi, Harasekhara, or the "Crest of Shiva," Khapaga, "Flowing from Heaven," Tripathaga, "Three-way Flowing," Mandakini, Gently Flowing, Jahnavi, after the Sage Jahnu, etc.

GARUDA. King of the Birds, the vehicle of Shri Vishnu and the destroyer of serpents, sometimes portrayed as an eagle or jay.

GAUTAMA. A great sage, the husband of Ahalya q.v.

GAYATRI. The most sacred prayer of the Rig-Veda. A Goddess, wife of Brahma, mother of the Four Vedas.

GODAVERI. A river close to the Dandaka Forest.

GODHA. A piece of leather or metal worn on the left arm to protect it from the bow-string.

GOHA. A soft leather, possibly cow or doeskin.

GOLANGULA. A black monkey that has a tail like a cow's.

GOLOBHA. A giant.

GOSHPADA. A measurement equal to a cow's hoof.

GRANDSIRE OF THE WORLD. A title of Brahma.

GRIDHIRAS. Birds of prey.

GRIHI. A person who, having finished his education, marries and becomes a householder. Also known as Grihasta.

GUHA. King of the Nishadas, a mountain tribe. A great devotee of Rama.

GUHYAKAS. Hidden Beings, attendants on Kuvera q.v.

GUNAS. "Guna" literally means a thread or strand. It is also used for a quality, attribute or property: for instance, the air has tangibility and sound for its "guna". According to the Sankhya Philosophy, nature consists of the equipoise of the three gunas Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas, or goodness, passion and darkness, which are the characteristics of all created things.

GURU. A traditional Teacher of the spiritual science. One who dispels ignorance.

H

HALA HALA. The poison churned from the ocean by Gods and Demons.

HAMSA. Swan, flamingo or heron.

HANUMAN or HANUMAT. A monkey minister of Sugriva, the King of the Monkeys. Hanuman was the son of Pavana, the God of the Wind and Anjana. He became a devotee of Rama's and was an ideal disciple. He is also known as Maruti, Anjaneya, Yogachara, for his magic and healing powers, and Rajata-dyuti, "The Brilliant".

HARI. The name of the Lord Vishnu, meaning "captivating" or "pleasing".

HARIVAHANA. A name of Garuda meaning " Bearer of Vishnu ".
HASTA. A star, the thirteenth lunar asterism identified as Corvus.
HAWAN. A particular offering to the Gods; an ancient fire-ceremony.
HAYAGRIVA. Lit.: " horse-necked ". According to one legend, Vishnu himself assumed this form to recover the Veda which had been carried off by two Daityas, Madhu and Kaitabha.
HEMA. A nymph; also a kind of gold.
HIMAPANDARA. One of the Elephants of the Four Quarters, supporting the earth.
HIMAVAT. Lit.: " The Abode of Snows ". The King of Himalaya.
HIRANYA-KASIHPU. Lit.: " Golden Dress ". A Daitya who obtained the sovereignty of the Three Worlds from Shiva, for a million years, and persecuted his son Prahlada, a devotee of Vishnu.
HOMA. The Homa sacrifice is the act of making an oblation to the Gods by pouring butter into the fire, to the accompaniment of prayers and invocations. It is regarded as one of the five great sacrifices called " Deva-yajnas ".

IKSHNAKU. Son of Manu, founder of the Solar Race of Kings who reigned in Ayodhya.
ILVALA. A demon subdued by the Sage Agastya.
INDRA. The King of the Gods, who is known under many other names, such as: Mahendra, or Great Indra, Shatakratu, or " He of a hundred sacrifices ", Purandara, " Destroyer of Cities", Vajrapani, "Of the Thunderbolt hand", " Lord of Sachi ", Maghavan, "Possessor of Wealth ".
INDRALOKA. The Abode of Indra or the Celestial Realm.
IRAVATI. Mother of the elephant Airavata.

J

JABALI. A Brahmin of King Dasaratha's court.
JAGARI. Coarse brown sugar made of palm sap.
JAHNAVI. A name of the sacred River Gunga.
JAHNU. The Sage who drank up the Gunga.
JAMBAVAN or JAMBAVAT. King of the Bears, an ally of Rama.
JAMBU. A river.
JAMBUDWIPA. One of the seven continents of which the world was said to be composed.
JANAKA. King of Mithila, father of Sita.
JANAKI. A name of Sita.

JANASTHANA. The colony of Titans in the Dandaka Forest.
JAPA. Silent repetition of a prayer or sacred formula.
JATARUPA. Gold in its original purity.
JATAYU. The King of the Vultures, who attempted to prevent Ravana from carrying Sita away.
JAYA. A Goddess, producer of weapons.
JAYANTA. King Dasaratha's minister.
JUTA. The matted locks of a devotee.

K

KABANDHA. An Asura or Demon, slain by Rama and Lakshmana.
KADAMVARI. Natural wines which require no preparation.
KADRU. A daughter of Daksha and wife of the Rishi Kashyapa; she was the mother of the many-headed serpents, including Shesha and Vasuki.
KAIKEYA. The Kingdom ruled over by King Kaikeya.
KAIKEYI. Favourite Queen of King Dasaratha and mother of Bharata.
KAILASHA. Sacred mountain, said to be the abode of Shiva.
KAKUTSTHA. A title used for the descendants of Kakutstha in the House of Ikshwaku, also for Puranjaya, a prince of the Solar race, whose story is told in the Vishnu Purana. From "KAKUD", an emblem of royalty and "STHA"—residing—meaning a prince, a grandson of Ikshwaku.
KALAGURU. Aloes or Agallochum, a species of sandal.
KALAHAMSA. A kind of duck or goose, Gallinula Porphyria.
KALAKA. Wife of the Rishi Kashyapa, mother of the Danavas.
KALINDI. Wife of King Asit.
KALMASHI. A titan, demon or goblin.
KAMA or KANDARPA. The Indian Cupid, or God of Love.
KAPILA. A great Sage who destroyed the sons of King Sagara.
KARANDA or KARANDAVA. A species of duck.
KARKA. The sign of Cancer.
KARMA. The law governing the behaviour of matter in all its gross and subtle forms, according to the divine purpose.
KARTTIKA. The month October—November. When the sun enters Libra.
KARTTIKEYA. The God of War, the son of Shiva, also called Skanda and Mahasena "Great Captain,"
KASHI. The sacred City of Benares.
KASHYAPA. The great Vedic Sage, grandson of Brahma and father of Vivaswat.
KATYAYANA. An ancient writer of great celebrity, author of the Dharmashastra.
KAUPIN. A loin-cloth.
KAUSHALYA. Chief Queen of King Dasaratha and mother of Rama.

KAUSHIKA. Title of Vishwamitra after his grandfather. Also a devotee who went to hell for having pointed out a road to robbers, by which they pursued and killed some persons who were fleeing from them.

KAUSHIKI. A river said to be Vishwamitra's sister.

KAUSTUBHA. Celebrated jewel churned from the ocean and worn by Shri Vishnu.

KAVYAHANAS. A class of Celestial Beings.

KESHNI. Chief Queen of King Sagara.

KHARA. The brother of Ravana. A demon, slain by Rama,

KHIVA or KHEEVA. Frumenty, hulled wheat boiled in milk and sweetened.

KINNERAS. Celestial Beings attendant on Kuvera q.v.

KIRTI. A celestial Nymph, personifying fame and glory.

KISHKINDHA. The country ruled over by Bali, possibly Mysore. This Kingdom was given to Sugriva by Rama.

KNOWER OF SELF. Knower of Truth or Reality. An illumined being.

KOSHALA. The kingdom ruled over by King Dasaratha.

KOTI. Ten million.

KOYASHTIKA. The lapwing.

KRAUNCHA. A species of heron, Ardea Jaculator.

KRAUNCHACHARYA. A Sage.

KRAUNCHARANYA. A forest. Lit.: "The Forest of the Heron".

KRAUNCHI. The daughter of Kashyapa and Tamra, mother of owls and birds of prey.

KRIKALA. A partridge.

KAITABHA and MADHU. Two Daityas who carried off the Vedas and were slain by Vishnu.

KRITTIKAS. The Pleiades, nurses of the God of War.

KSHIRODA. The Ocean of Milk.

KUBIJA. A hunchback servant of Queen Kaikeyi.

KUMBHAKARNA. Brother of Ravana, a monster killed by Rama.

KUNJARA. Maternal grandfather of Hanuman.

KURARA. An osprey.

KUSHA. One of the sons of Rama and Sita.

KUVERA. The God of Wealth.

LAGNA-KARKA. The sign of Cancer.

LAGNA-MEENA. The sign of Pisces.

LAGNAS. The twelve signs of the Zodiac are considered as rising above the horizon in the course of the day. The Lagna has the name of the sign; its duration is from the first rising of

the sign till the whole is above the horizon. Lagna literally means the point where the horizon and the path of the planet meet.

LAKSHMANA. Son of King Dasaratha and Queen Sumitra, favourite brother of Rama who accompanied him in his exile. Lakshmana was said to be the incarnation of the thousand-headed Shesha, the serpent who upholds the world.

LAKSHMI. The consort of Shri Vishnu, also known as " Shri ", signifying prosperity. Sita was said to be an incarnation of Lakshmi.

LAMBA. A mountain.

LANKA. The kingdom ruled over by Ravana, the King of the Titans, probably Ceylon.

LOHITANGA. The planet Mars.

LOKAPALAS. The Guardians of the Four Quarters.

LOMAPADA. A King whose story is told in Balakanda.

LOSHTHA. A vessel of coconut or metal used for begging or ceremonial purposes.

M

MADA. The temporal juices of an elephant in rut.

MADANA. God of Love, Kama or Kandarpa.

MADHA. A spiritous liquor, made of honey and molasses or the blossom of Bassia Latifolia.

MADHU. A Demon.

MADHUCCHANDA. Vishwamitra's son, cursed by his father for disobedience.

MADHUPARKA. A mixture of curds, butter, honey and the milk of the coconut, a traditional offering.

MADHUSUDANA. Name of Shri Vishnu, meaning the " Destroyer of the Demon Madhu ".

MAGADHA. A kingdom; now South Bihar.

MAGDA-PHALGUNI. The season from the middle of January to the middle of March.

MAHADEVA. 'Great God,' a title of Shiva.

MAHAPADMA. One of the Elephants of the Four Quarters.

MAHARATHAS. Car Warriors.

MAHARATHRAS. Great Warriors.

MAHATMA. 'Great-souled One,' a title given to a Sage or Rishi.

MAHAVANA. ' Great Forest.'

MAHODARA. A son of Vishwamitra's. Also a general in Ravana's army.

MAHODAYA. An ascetic who was transformed into one of the lowest caste by Vishwamitra's curse.

MAINA. Mina or Mynah, a small percher about the size of a swallow which can be taught to repeat words.

MAINAKA or MINAKA. A golden mountain, north of Kailasha. Also a numph who tempted Vishwamitra.

MAIREYA or MIREYA. Liquor extracted from the blossom of the Lythrum Fructicosum tree, mixed with sugar.

MAITHILA or MITHILA. The kingdom ruled over by King Janaka.

MAITHILI. A name of Sita, as daughter of the King of Mithila.

MAITRA. Period of the early morning.

MAKARA. A kind of sea monster, sometimes confounded with a shark, crocodile or dolphin.

MALAYA. A mountain.

MANASAROVA. A lake on Mount Kailasha, lit.: "The Lake of the Mind", said to be hollowed out of the mind of Brahma.

MANDAKINI. A river near Mt. Chittrakuta.

MANDARA. A mountain used in the churning of the ocean by Gods and Titans.

MANDARKANI. A Sage who created the Lake of Five Nymphs.

MANDAVI. Bharata's wife, daughter of King Kushadwaja.

MANDHATA or MANDHATRI. A king.

MANDODARI. The wife of Ravana.

MANKUKA. A musical instrument.

MANMATHA. A name of Kama, the God of Love.

MANTHARA. The hunchbacked maid of Kaikeyi.

MANTRA. Mantras or mantrams are sacred formulas.

MANU. The First Man who was given the Holy Truth by his father Vivaswat—see Bhagawadgita, Chapter IV, opening verses.

MARICHA. A demon who, disguised as a deer, lured Rama from his hermitage.

MARICHIPAS. A class of ascetics who derive their nourishment from particles of light.

MARKANDEYA. A Sage, remarkable for his austerities.

MARUTI. A name of Hanuman as son of Maruta, the God of Wind.

MARUTS. The Wind-Gods, or Gods of the Tempest.

MASHAS. A class of Sages or Hermits.

MATALI. Indra's charioteer.

MATANGA. A great Sage.

MATARISHWAN. An aerial being, mentioned in the Rig-Veda as bringing down fire to earth.

MAYA. The deluding power of the Lord, by which the universe has come into existence and appears to be real. A Giant who created a magical cave dwelling.

MAYAVI. A giant killed by Bali.

MEGHA. The Regent of the clouds.

MERU. A great and sacred mountain.

MERUSAVARNI. A great ascetic.

MLECCHAS. Foreigners, barbarians, eaters of flesh. A people said

to be born of the sacred cow Shabala for her protection. See Balakanda.

MRIDANGA. A kind of drum.

MRIGI. Daughter of Krodhavasha, mother of elephants.

MRITYU. The God of Death, another name for Yama.

MUHURTA. An instant, a moment, an hour, according to the context.

MUNI. A holy Sage, a pious and learned person, a title applied to Rishis and others.

MURAGA. A tambourine.

MUSHTIKAS. People cursed by Vishwamitra who assumed the lowest caste.

N

NABHAGA. The son of Yayati and father of Aja, who was Dasaratha's father.

NAGAS. The Serpent Race.

NAHUSHA. The father of King Yayati, Nahusha's curious story is found in the Mahabharata and Puranas.

NAIRRITAS. A race of Demons, offspring of Nairriti or Niritti.

NAKAPRISHTA. The highest heaven (from Naka—vault) in which there is no unhappiness.

NAKSHATRAS. The Hindus, beside the common division of the Zodiac into twelve signs, divided it into 27 Nakshatras, two to each sign. Each Nakshatra has its appropriate name :—

1. Aswini. 2. Bharani. 3. Krittika. 4. Rohini. 5. Mr'gashriras. 6. Ardea. 7. Purnavasu. 8. Pushya. 9. Alesha. 10. Magna. 11. Purva-phalguni. 12. Uttaraphalguni. 13. Hasta. 14. Chitra. 15. Svati. 16. Vishaka. 17. Anuradha. 18. Jyasatha. 19. Mula. 20. Purvashadha. 21. Uttarashraddha. 22. Abijit. 23. Shravana. 24. Shravishtha or Dhanishta. 25. Shatabhishaj. 26. Purva Bhadrapada. 27. Uttara-Bhadrapada. 28. Revati.

(The last is used if Abijit is omitted.)

NALA. A monkey chief, a general in Sugriva's army.

NALINI. A river.

NAMUCHI. A demon slain by Indra.

NANDANA. Indra's celestial garden.

NANDI. Sacred bull, the vehicle of Shiva, symbolising the Sattwaguna, q.v.

NANDIGRAMA. The city from which Bharata ruled in the absence of Rama.

NARADA. A divine Sage who appeared to Valmiki, see Balakanda.

NARAKA. Hell, a place of torture where the wicked are sent. Manu enumerates twenty hells.

NARAYANA. A name of Shri Vishnu, so called because the waters (nara) were his first place of motion.
NARMADA. A river.
NATYUHA. A bird. A small galliuile.
NIDHIS. The personified Treasures of the God of Wealth, Kuvera.
NIKUMBHILA. A grove on the outskirts of Lanka.
NILA. A monkey chief, general in Sugriva's army.
NIMI. A royal ancestor of King Janaka.
NISHADAS. A mountain tribe dwelling in the Vindhya Mountains, living on hunting.
NISHKA. A gold piece or nugget, sometimes worn as an ornament.

O

OM. See Aum.
OSHADI or OSHADI-PRASTHA. " The Place of Medicinal Herbs ", a city in the Himalayas mentioned in ' Kumara-Sambhava.'

P

PADMA. A measurement, a thousand billions.
PAHLAVA. Warriors born from the sacred cow Shabala, possibly Persians. See Balakanda.
PAKA. A demon slain by Indra.
PAMPA. A lake by which Rama and Lakshmana rested in their exile.
PANAVA. A tabor or cymbal.
PANCHAPSARAS. 'The Lake of Five Nymphs' created by the Sage Mandarkarni.
PANCHAVATI. A district near the source of the Godaveri River where Rama passed a period of his exile.
PANNAGAS. Celestial serpents, offspring of Kadru.
PARAMARISHIS. Great or Supreme Rishis, q.v.
PARAMATMAN. The Absolute, Brahman.
PARANTAPA. A title meaning " Oppressor of the Foe ".
PARASURAMA. 'Rama with the axe,' the sixth incarnation of Shri Vishnu, son of Yamadagni and Renuka.
PARIHARYAS. A bracelet.
PARIPLAVA. A spoon used in sacrifices.
PARIYATRA. One of the principal mountain ranges of India.
PARJANYA. A Vedic Deity or Rain God. Sometimes this title is used for Indra.
PARVAN. The period of the moon's change.
PARVATI. Shiva's consort, also known under many other names, such as Bahravi, Devi, Girija, Kanya, Sati, Padma-Lanchana,

Shiva-Duti, Uma and countless others.
PASHUPATI. Lord of Creatures, a title of Shiva.
PATAGAS. Winged creatures.
PATAHA. A kind of drum.
PATALA. The infernal regions.
PAULASTYA. See Poulastya.
PAULOMA. Wife of Kashyapa, mother of the Danavas.
PAVAKA. A name of Agni, the God of Fire.
PAVANA. The God of the Wind, father of Hanuman.
PAYASA. A preparation of rice and milk.
PHALGUNI. A Nakshatra, q.v.
PINAKA. Sacred bow.
PINGAS. " Tawny Ones ", a name given to the monkey race.
PISACHAS. Ghosts or evil spirits.
PITTRIS. Manes or Ancestors.
PLAVAGAS or PLAVAMGAMAS. Those who move by leaps and bounds; a title given to the Monkey Race.
POULASTYA. One of the Seven Immortal Sages, Grandfather of Ravana.
PRABHA. The consort of the Moon, also the personification of the light of the Sun.
PRABHAKARA. The Sun.
PRABHAVA. A minister of Sugriva's.
PRADAKSHINA. Circumambulation in a reverent manner from left to right.
PRAHASTA. Father of Jambavan, a general in Sugriva's army.
PRALAMBA. A mountain.
PRALAYA. Period of the dissolntion of the world.
PRAMATHIN. A monkey renowned for his courage.
PRANA. The vital air or breath.
PRASRAVANA. A mountain.
PRATYAKSTHALI. A sacred grove, a site facing the West.
PRAUSTHAPADA. August—September.
PRAYAGA. The confluence of the Ganges and the Yamuna, a sacred spot.
PRISHATA. Spotted deer, cow or piebald horse.
PRIYAKA. A spotted deer.
PULOMAN. A Danava, father of Sachi, consort of Indra.
PUNARVASU. The seventh and most auspicious Nakshatra, q.v.
PURANAS. Legends and tales of ancient times in epic form. There are eighteen chief Puranas.
PURANDARA. Destroyer of Cities, a title of Indra.
PUROHITA. A family priest.
PURURAVAS. A king who wedded the nymph Urvashi.
PURUSHA. The supreme Spirit, the highest Reality.
PUSHAN. The Sun.
PUSHPAKA. A celestial aerial chariot which was so vast that it contained palaces and their precincts.

PUSHPITAKA. A mountain.

PUSHYA. A constellation of three stars considered auspicious. Also the sixth lunar mansion.

PUTTRA. A son who is said to deliver his father from hell.

PUTTRESTI. A ceremony performed for the extending of the race by the birth of sons.

R

RAGHAVA. A title of those belonging to the House of Raghu to which King Dasaratha and his forbears belonged.

RAHU. A mythical demon said to cause the eclipse of the sun and the moon.

RAJAHAMSA. Royal Swan or Flamingo.

RAJAS. See Guna.

RAJASUYA Sacrifice. A great sacrifice performed in ancient times at the installation of a monarch.

RAKSHASAS. Demons or Titans.

RAKSHASI. Female Titan or Demon.

RAMA or RAMACHANDRA. The Incarnation of Shri Vishnu and the eldest son of King Dasaratha. It is round this great figure that the 'Ramayana' was created.

RAMA-KATHA. The recitation of 'Ramayana' which has been a tradition in India for thousands of years.

RAMBHA. A nymph symbolising the perfection of beauty from Indra's realm; often sent to distract Sages from their pious practices.

RATHA. A chariot.

RATI. The Consort of the God of Love.

RATNA. A necklace.

RAVANA. A Titan, the King of Lanka who carried off Sita and was slain by Rama. The name means the 'Vociferous' 'One who roars.'

RAVI. The Sun.

RENUKA. The wife of Yamadagni and mother of Parasurama.

RIKSHABHA. A mountain.

RIKSHABILA. The magical cave where the monkeys stayed for a time, when searching for Sita.

RIKSHARAJAS. The father of Bali and Sugriva, a King of the Monkeys.

RIKSHAS. The Bears.

RISHI. A great Sage or illumined being of which there are four classes :—

Rajarishi—A royal Rishi,

Maharishi—A great Rishi,
Brahmarishi—A sacred Rishi,
Devarishi—A divine Rishi.

RISHYAMUKA. A mountain on which Sugriva took refuge.

RISHYASHRINGA. The "Deer-horned" Son of the Sage Vibhandaka who married the daughter of King Lomapada, Shanta, and later performed the Puttresti ceremony (q.v.) for King Dasaratha

RITVIJS. Priest officiating at the installation ceremony.

ROHI. A fish, Cyprinus Rohita Ham.

ROHINI. The star Aldebaran.

ROHITA. A kind of deer.

ROHITAS. Name of the horses of the sun, also a Deity celebrated in the Atharva Veda, probably a form of Fire or the Sun.

RUDRA. A name of Shiva.

RUDRAS. The sons of Kashyapa and Aditi.

RUMA. Sugriva's Consort.

RUMANA. Sugriva's general, a monkey chief.

RURU. A deer.

S

SACHI. Indra's Consort.

SADHYAS. The personified rites and prayers of the Vedas who dwell between heaven and earth, a class of Deities.

SAGARA. A King whose history is told in Balakanda.

SAMPATI. A vulture, brother of Jatayu.

SAMUDRA. Lord of Rivers, the Ocean.

SANATKUMARA. One of the mind-born sons of Brahma.

SANTANA. One of the five trees in Indra's Paradise.

SAPINDI. The Sapindi Ceremony is for the establishing of a connection with kindred through funeral offerings.

SAPTAJANAS. The 'Hermitage of the Seven Sages.'

SARABHA or SHARABHA. Legendary animal with eight legs.

SARANGA. A bird.

SARASWATI. The Goddess of speech and learning, also a river named after her.

SARAYU. Sacred river, the Sarju.

SARVABHAUMA. The elephant that carries Kuvera q.v.

SATARHADA. Mother of the Demon Viradha.

SATYAVATI. The sister of the Sage Vishwamitra; she became the Kaushika river.

SATYA-YUGA. The Golden Age or Yuga. There are four Yugas which make up a Kalpa or world cycle :—
The Satya Yuga or Golden Age.
The Treta Yuga or Silver Age.
The Dwapara Yuga or Copper Age.

The Kali Yuga or Black Age, also called the Iron Age.
SAUMANASA. One of the elephants of the four quarters.
SAUMITRI. Sumitra's son, Lakshmana.
SAURA. A divine potion. Lit.: "Relating to the Sun".
SAUVARCALA. Sochal salt or alkali.
SHABARI. A female ascetic, devotee of Rama.
SHAKRA. A name of Indra's.
SHALMALI. A fabulous thorny rod of the cotton tree used for torturing the wicked in hell.
SHALYAKA. A Porcupine. See also Weapons.
SHAMBARA. The Demon of Drought, represented in the Rig Veda as the enemy of Indra.
SHANKHAS. A measurement, a hundred billions or a hundred thousand crores. (A crore is ten millions).
SHANKU. Ten billions.
SHANTA. The daughter of King Lomapada who was wedded to the Sage Rishyashringa.
SHARABANDA. The mother of the Demon Viradha.
SHARABHANGA. A Sage visited by Rama and Sita in the Dandaka Forest.
SHASANKA. The Consort of Rohini or the moon.
SHASI. The moon. Lit.: "Hare-marked".
SHASTRAS. Teachings of divine and recognised authority.
SHATANANDA. Son of the Sage Gautama and spiritual director to the King Janaka.
SHATAPATRA. "Having a hundred petals". (See Lotus, under 'Flowers and Trees Glossary.') 'Having a hundred feathers,' said of a peacock or crane. 'Having a hundred wings' or conveyances, said of Brihaspati, q.v.
SHATRUGHNA. King Dasaratha's fourth son, whose mother was Sumitra.
SHISHUMARA. Lit.: 'Child-killer', a word used for crocodile, porpoise or dolphin.
SHIVA. The Lord as Destroyer of Ignorance, also Lord of Bliss.
SHIVYA or SHIVI. A King of the Raghu Dynasty who rescued the God Agni when he had transformed himself into a pigeon and was pursued by Indra, in the form of a hawk.
SHONA. A sacred river.
SHRAVANA. The month of July—August. Also a Nakshatra, q.v.
SHRI. A title of courtesy, also the Consort of Vishnu, Lakshmi, who is the Goddess of Prosperity.
SHRUTA-KIRTI. The Consort of Shatrughna.
SHRUTI or SRUTI. Holy teachings lit.: "What is heard".
SHUDRA. The lowest of the four castes.
SHUKRA. The planet Venus. Said to be the son of Brighu.
SHUNAKA. Son of the Sage Richika.
SHUNASHEPA. Son of the Sage Richika, offered as a sacrifice and saved by the Sage Vishwamitra.

SHURPANAKHA. Sister of Ravana, a female Titan mutilated by Rama and Lakshmana.

SHVADAMSHTRAS. Earrings.

SHVASANA. A name of the Wind-god. Also of the Demon of Drought slain by Indra.

SHYENAS. Falcons, hawks, eagles, etc., the offspring of Shyeni.

SHYENI. Daughter of Kashyapa and Tamra, mother of birds of prey.

SHVETA. A mountain.

SIDDHARTA. One of King Dasaratha's counsellors.

SIDDHAS. Semi-divine beings, who dwell between the earth and the sun.

SIDHU. A kind of rum distilled from molasses.

SIMHIKA, SINHIKA or SINGHIKA. A female demon who caught hold of Hanuman's shadow.

SINDHU. The river Indus. Also a country east of Koshala.

SITA. Daughter of King Janaka, King of Mithila, and Rama's consort.

SIX KINDS OF TASTE. Sweet, bitter, acid, salt, pungent, acrid and harsh.

SMRITI. Tradition. Lit.: "What is remembered".

SOMA. The fermented juice of 'Asclepias-acida', used as a beverage or libation in sacred ceremonies.

SOMADATTA. Daughter of Urmila and mother of Brahmadatta.

SOMAGIRI. A mountain.

SOURA
SOURASHTRA. } Countries east of Koshala.

SRIMARAS. Marine monsters.

STHULASHIRA. A Sage harassed by the Demon Kabandha.

SUBAHU. A demon who disturbed the sacrifices of the Sage Vishwamitra.

SUBHADRA. A sacred tree.

SUCHENA. Son of Varuna, the Lord of the Waters.

SUDAMANA. One of King Janaka's ministers.

SUGRIVA. King of the Monkeys and Rama's ally.

SUMANTRA. The Prime Minister of King Dasaratha.

SUMATI. Younger wife of King Sagara, who gave birth to sixty-thousand sons.

SUMERU. A sacred mountain.

SUMITRA. Mother of Lakshmana and Shatrughna.

SUNABHA. Lit.: "Having a beautiful navel", a title of the mountain Mainaka.

SUNDA. Father of Maricha.

SUPARNA. A name of Garuda, meaning "Chief of Birds".

SUPARSHWA. Son of the Vulture Sampati.

SUPRABHA. A Goddess who created celestial weapons, daughter of Daksha.

SURABHA. Daughter of Krodhavasha, consort of Kashyapa.

SURAS. A name of the Gods. In the Vedas it applied to offspring of the Sun.
SURASHTRAS. One of King Dasaratha's ministers.
SURYA. The Sun, one of the three chief deities of the Vedas.
SUSHENA. The father of Tara, Bali's consort.
SUTIKSHNA. A Sage who dwelt in the Dandaka Forest and entertained Rama, Lakshmana and Sita during their wanderings.
SUTA. Khara's charioteer.
SUTRAS. Poetical rhythms or stanzas.
SUVARHALA. The consort of the Sun.
SUYAJNA. Spiritual Director of King Dasaratha.
SVADANGSTRAS. Ornaments worn in the ears.
SVAHA. Word of power or invocation.
SVARBHANU. The Demon Rahu, q.v.
SVATI. The star Arcturus.
SVAVIDH. A Porcupine or Hedgehog.
SWYAMBHU. The Self-Existence, a name of the Creator, Shri Brahma.
SWYAMPRABHA. The Daughter of the Sage Merusavarni.
SWYAMVARA. The ceremony of choosing a consort.
SYANDARA. A river.

T

TALA. A leather strap used by archers. A clapper used in music.
TAMASA. A river.
TAMRA. One of the wives of the Sage Kashyapa.
TAPAS. Penance or austerity.
TAPOVANA. A forest.
TARA. The consort of Bali.
TARAKA. A female demon.
TARKSHYA. In ancient times considered as the personification of the sun in the form of a bird. Later it became a name for Garuda.
TARKSHYAS. Father of the Monkeys.
TEJAS. Lustre, energy or radiance, often used for spiritual power.
THIRTY THE, TRI-DASA. This title applies to the Gods. In round numbers, thirty-three—Twelve Adityas, eight Vasus, eleven Rudras and two Ashwins.
THREE WORLDS THE. Bhur, Bhuvah, Swah, the Lower, Middle and Upper Worlds, also called Tri-Loka and Tri-Bhuvana. Heaven, Earth and Hell.
TILAKA. A mark of auspiciousness placed on the forehead.
TIMINGILA. Lit.: " Swallowing even a Timis ", a name of a fabulous fish.
TIMIS. A whale.

TISHYA. An asterism shaped like an arrow, containing three stars, also called Pushya and Sidhya.
TRIJATA. A Brahmin whose story is told in Balakanda. Also a female titan who spoke in defence of Sita.
TRIKUTA. " Three-Peaked ", the mountain on which Lanka was built.
TRIPATHAGA. " Three-way flowing ", the Traverser of the Three Worlds, a name of the Ganges.
TRIPURA. A demon slain by Shiva. A city burnt by the Gods.
TRISHANKU. A King of the Solar Race, whose story is told in Balakanda.
TRISHIRAS. A demon slain by Rama.
TRIVIKRAMA. The name of Shri Vishnu, when taking the three strides covering the earth.
TRIVISTAPA. The world of Indra.
TRYAMBAKA. " Three-eyed " a name of Shiva.
TWICE-BORN. Only a brahmin can strictly be termed " twice-born ", but the term came to be extended to the warrior and agricultural classes.
TUMBURU. A Gandharva cursed by the God Kuvera and born as the Demon Viradha.

U

UCCHAIHSHRAVAS. The white horse of Indra's, produced from the churning of the ocean. It is said to be fed on ambrosia and be the King of Horses.
UDAYA. A golden mountain.
UMA. A name of Parvati, daughter of Himavat and consort of Shiva.
UPA-NAYA. The ceremony of investiture of the sacred thread, by which act spiritual birth is conferred on a youth and he is considered a member of the Brahmin or Twice-born class. The age at which this ceremony takes place is between eight and sixteen years.
UPANISHAD. Esoteric doctrine. The third division of the Vedas, forming part of the revealed World.
UPENDRA. Name of Shri Vishnu or Krishna.
URAGAS. Great Serpents.
URMILA. Consort of Lakshmana.
URVASHI. A nymph mentioned in the Rig-Veda. Many legends are told about her in the classics.
USHANAS. Another name of Shukra or the planet Venus.
USHIRAS. A hair like grass growing on the golden trees in hell. See also Flowers and Trees Glossary.
UTTARA-KURUS. Northern Kurus, a people with whom the Sages took refuge.

UTTARA-PHALGUNI. A constellation, under which Sita was said to have been born.

V

VACHASPATI. Mother of the Gods, Goddess of speech and learning.
VADABA or VADAVA. Lit.: 'Mare's Fire', the subterranean fire or fire of the lower regions, fabled to emerge from a cavity called the 'Mare's mouth' under the sea at the south pole.
VAGARINASAKA. A bird, dark throated and white winged. Also a species of food.
VAIDEHA or VIDEHA. The kingdom ruled over by Janaka.
VAIDEHI. A name of Sita as daughter of the King of Videha.
VAIKHANASAS. A class of Rishi or Hermit.
VAIROCHANA. A name of Bali.
VAISHNAVA. Sacrifice in honour of Shri Vishnu.
VAISHRAVANA. A name of Kuvera, Ravana's brother.
VAISHVANARA. A name of the God Agni.
VAISHYAS. The merchant or agricultural class.
VAITARANI. The River of Hell.
VAIVASWAT. A name of the God Yama.
VAJAPEYA. A sacrifice at which an acetous mixture of meal and water is offered to the Gods.
VAJRADHARA. "Wielder of the Thunderbolt", a name for Indra.
VALAKHILYAS. Divine Beings, the size of a thumb, sixty thousand of whom sprang from the body of Brahma and surround the chariot of the sun.
VALI. See Bali.
VALLAKI. A small crane, also an Indian lute.
VALMIKI. Poet, Sage, author of Ramayana.
VAMANA. The Holy Dwarf, fifth divine Incarnation of Shri Vishnu.
VAMADEVA. A great Rishi, present at Rama's installation.
VANA. Forest.
VANAPRASTHA. A festival similar to a Harvest Festival.
VANARAS. 'Dweller in the Forest,' a title given to the Monkey Race, also called 'Deer of the Trees'.
VANARIS. Female Monkeys.
VANCULAKA. A mythical bird.
VARUNA. The Indian Neptune, Lord of the Waters.
VARUNI. Daughter of Varuna, the personification of Wine.
VASAVA. A name for Indra.
VASISHTHA. The spiritual preceptor of King Dasaratha.
VASUDEVA. A name of the Lord.
VASUKI. The Serpent King.
VASUS. Sons of Kashyapa and Aditi. The eight Vasus were originally personifications of natural phenomena, Apa, Dhruva, Soma, Dhara, Anila, Anala, Pratyusha and Prabhasa.
VASVOKASARA. Another name for Amaravati, Indra's capital.

VATA. A name of Vayu, q.v.
VATAPI. A demon consumed by the Sage Agastya.
VAYU. The God of the Wind.
VEDA. The Holy Scriptures of the Hindu religion. Fountain of Divine Knowledge.
VEDANGAS. A sacred science considered subordinate to and in some sense a part of the Vedas—six subjects come under the denomination :—
1. Siksha—pronunciation. 2. Kalpa—religious rites. 3. Vyakarana—Grammar. 4. Chandas—Prosody. 5. Jyotish—Astronomy. 5. Nirukti—Explanation of difficult words.
VEDI. An altar of Kusha grass. Place of sacrifice.
VIBHANDAKA. Son of the Sage Kashyapa and father of Rishyashringa.
VIBISHANA. See Bibishana.
VIBHUDHAS. Celestial Beings.
VIDARBHA. A country, probably Birar, whose capital was Kundinapura.
VIDEHA. See Vaideha.
VIDHATAR. " Arranger ", " Disposer ", " Creator ". Name of Brahma.
VIDHYADHARAS. Lit. : " Magical knowledge holder ". Particular good or evil spirits attendant on the Gods.
VINA. An Indian lute.
VINATA. The mother of Garuda.
VINDHA. The auspicious hour for finding what has been lost.
VINDHYA. A mountain ordered by Agastya not to increase in height.
VIPANCI. An Indian lute.
VIRADHA. A demon, son of Java and Shatarade who was slain by Rama and had formerly been the Gandharva Tumburu.
VIROCHANA. A giant, father of Bali.
VIRUPAKSHA. Elephant of one of the Four Quarters.
VISHAKAS. One of the lunar asterisms, also a month of the flowering season.
VISHNU. The Lord in His aspect of Maintainer of the Universe.
VISHRAVAS. Son of Poulastya and father of Ravana and Kuvera.
VISHWADEVAS. All the Gods, said to be " Preserver of Men and Bestowers of Rewards ".
VISHWAKARMA. Architect of the Gods.
VISHWAMITRA. A great Sage whose story is told in Balakanda.
VISHWARUPA. A title of Vishnu meaning " wearing all forms " "Omnipresent." Also the son of Vishwakarma slain by Indra.
VISHWATAM. The God of the Wind.
VITAPAVATI. The celestial city of Kuvera.
VIVASWAT. ' The Brilliant One ', a title given to the Sun.
VRINDA. A large number, a multitude.
VRITRASURA or VRITRA. A demon slain by Indra.

Y

YADU. The son of Yayati and Devayani. Yayati was the founder of the Yadavas in which line Krishna was born.

YAJNA. A sacrifice or penance.

YAJURVEDA. The part of the Veda that treats of ceremonies and rites.

YAKSHAS. Supernatural Beings attendant on the God Kuvera.

YAMA. The God of Death.

YAMUNA. A sacred river.

YATUDHANAS. Evil spirits that assume various forms.

YAVANAS. A people said to have been born of the sacred cow Shabala.

YAYATI. The son of Nahusha, a forbear of King Dasaratha. His story appears in the Mahabharata and Vishnu Purana.

YOGA. A School of Philosophy of which the most important is Adwaita, the non-dualist system elaborated by Shri Shankaracharya.

YOJANA. A measurement. Approximately four or five miles.

YUGA. A world age or period. The Yugas are four in number and their duration several thousands of years. Between each of the periods there is a time of Sandhya or Twilight when creation is withdrawn and lies latent or potential in the Supreme Spirit or Brahman. The Yugas are called Krita, Treta, Dwapara and Kali.

FLOWERS AND TREES

(Wherever possible an English equivalent has been given or some description of the plant or tree; some however could not be traced)

A

AGNIMUKHA. Semicarpus Anancardium Zeylanica, the Plumbago or Plumbago Zeylanica. A white flowered shrub, that blooms in June or July; its flowers are set in spikes. The plant is medicinal.

AGNIMUKHYA. The Marking Nut plant.

AMLAKA. Phyllanthus Emblica. A many branched shrub resembling Hemlock.

AMRA. Mango Mangifera Indica. A short-trunked tree covered with evergreen foliage, which flowers from January to March, the blossom being partly white and partly greenish yellow with an orange stripe on each petal.

ANKOLA or ANKOTA, ANGOLATA, ANKOTHA. Alangium Hexapetalum. A poison, Ankola-sara, is prepared from this plant.

ARAVINDA. Nymphoea Nelumbo, a water-lily.

ARISTA. Sapindus Saponeria, the Soap plant.

ARJUNA or ARJUNAKA. Terminalia Arjuna, a species of Nimba tree. A tall evergreen tree usually found on the banks of streams. The leaves cluster at the end of the branches and the flowers are tiny. The Arjuna-Jarul, is the Queens flower or Crepe flower.

ASANA. Terminalia Tormentosa or, the plant Marsilla Quadrifolia. The first is a common forest tree yielding excellent timber similar to the Arjuna tree and rarely seen outside forest areas.

ASHOKA. Saraca Indica. A small evergreen tree which produces a profusion of orange and scarlet clusters in January and February with deep green shining foliage. Buddha was said to have been born under an Ashoka tree and Sita was kept by Ravana in an Ashoka Grove. Both Buddhists and Hindus regard it as sacred. It is medicinal.

ASHWA-KARNA. Vatica Robusta.

ASHWA-LAGNA. The Saul Tree.

ASHWATTHA. The Fig Tree, of which there are many varieties :—
Ficus Bengalensis—The Banian Tree.
Ficus Religiosa—The Pipal or Peepal or Bo Tree.
Ficus Glomerata—Rumbal or Umbar.
Ficus Elastica—The Indian Rubber Tree.

ATIMUKHA. Premna Spinoza. The wood by which attrition is produced.
ATIMUKTAS. Gaertnera Racemosa.

B

BADRI or VADRI. Zixyphus Jujuba. The Jujube Plant.
BAKULA or VAKULA. Mimisops Elengi.
BALALAKA. Flacourtia Cataphracta. A shrub with hairy leaves and edible fruit; the fine grained wood is used for turnery and combs. Flowers in March or April.
BANJULA or VANJULA. Hibiscus Mutabilis.
BANDHUJIVA. Pentapetes Phoenicea. A plant with a red flower which opens at midday and withers away next morning at sunrise.
BHANDIRA. Mimosa Seressa, a lofty fig tree.
BHANDUKA. Calosanthes Indica.
BHAVA. Indian Laburnum. Monkeys are particularly partial to the sweet pulp in which the seeds lie.
BHAVYA. Dillenia Indica alias Dillenia elliptica speciosa. A tree that grows to forty feet; it is an evergreen; the flowers are large, white with yellow antlers and appear at the end of the branches. This tree is found in dense forests in the north and is much cultivated round temples. The bark and leaves are medicinal and the juice from the acid fruit mixed with sugar forms a cooling drink. There is another small fruit tree allied to the 'Magnolia Speciosa' of this name.
BHAYA. Trapa Bispinosa.
BIJAPURA. Citrus Medica. Citron Tree.
BILWA. Aegle Marmelos, commonly called Bel. Wood apple which bears a delicious fruit that unripe is used for medicinal purposes; its leaves are used in the ceremonies of the worship of Shiva.
BIMBA or VIMBA. Momordica Monadelpha. A plant bearing a bright red gourd.

C

CHAMIKARA. Thorn apple.
CHAMPAKA. A species of Magnolia.
CHANDAKA. Clove.
CHANDANA. Sirium Folium. Red or False Sandalwood. It bears straw-coloured flowers changing to deep purple.
CHANDATA. Nerium Odorum. Sweet-scented Oleander Rosebay.
CUTA. Mango.

D

DADIMA. Common Pomegranate. Bears double flowers.
DADINA. Punica Granatum. Pomegranate. A shrub with large red flowers and hard globose fruit.
DEVADARU. A variety of pine.
DEVA PARNA. The Divine Leaf. A medicinal plant.
DHANVANA. Grewia Asiatica. Also, under different spellings, various other plants.
DHANWARIA. Echites Antidy Senterio. A Twining Plant.
DHARA. Woodfordia Florebunda. A small spreading shrub from which red dye is obtained from the bright red flowers. Also a species of Acacia.
DHATRI. Sterospermum Aciderifolium.
DHATURA. Datura Stramonium L. (Solanaceae) Thorn apple. A poisonous drug is made from this tree.
DHUVA. One of the Acacia family.
DURVA GRASS. Panicum Dactylon. Bent Grass.

E

F

G

GAJAPUSHPI. Elephant Flower. A sort of Arum.
GOSHIRSHAKA. A Sandal-tree.
GULAR. A resinous tree, fragments of which are put into the water in a loshta for ceremonial purposes.

H

HARISHYAMA. See Shyama.
HINTALA. Phoenix Sylvestus. The Marshy Date Tree.

I

J

JAMBU. Eugenia Jambolana. The Rose Apple or Java Plum.
JAMNU. Prunus Padus L. Bird Cherry.

GLOSSARY

K

KADALA. Musa Sapientum. A plantain. It has a soft perishable stem and is poetically as a symbol of the frailty of human life.
KADAMBA. Nauclea Cadumba, a plant.
KAHLARA. A white water lily.
KAKUBHA. Terminalia Arjuna. A tall evergreen tree with a smooth grey bark often tinged with green or red; usually found on the banks of streams. The creamy honey-scented flowers appear from March to June.
KAMANARI. A species of Mimosa.
KAMRANGA. Averrhoa Carambola.
KANYA. The name given to several plants, one of which is a tuberose plant growing in Kashmir. Also the Aloe Perfoliata.
KAPIMUKA. The Coffee plant.
KAPITHA. The Jack Fruit.
KARAVIRA. Another fragrant Oleander, common in many parts of India in the rocky stream beds and the lower Himalayas, fringing roads and rivers. The foliage is evergreen throughout the year but at its height during the rains, the colours are deep rose, pink and white, single and double. The sap is poisonous.
KARNIKARA. Pterospternum Acerfolium also called Cassia Fistula commonly called Kaniyar.
KARPURA. Ficus Glomerata or Wild Fig. In April the new leaves of shining dark red, lend it a beautiful appearance.
KASANARI. Gmelina Arborea. The Liquorice plant.
KASHAS. Reeds or Rushes.
KASHASTHALI. Bignonia Suaveolens. The Trumpet Flower.
KEDUMBRA. A Tree with fragrant orange-coloured flowers.
KETAKA. Pandanus Odoratissimus.
KHADIRA. Acacia Catechu. The Areca or Betel-nut Palm, which grows in the hot damp coastal regions of southern India and Ceylon. Betel nut is the fruit universally chewed by Asian peoples.
KHARJURA. Phoenix Sylvestris. Wild Date Palm or Toddy Palm. The leaves are greyish green; the scented flowers appear in March. The fruit is used for preserves and palm wine.
KICHAKAS. Arundo Karka. A reed. The name is also given to a hollow bamboo or rattling cane and a tree.
KIMSHUKA or KUMSHUKA. Butea Frondosa. Having beautiful orange flowers and a quantity of milky sticky juice. This tree is called the " Flame of the Forest " or the " Parrot Tree ". From January to March it is a mass of orange and vermilion; the flowers are unscented.

KOVIDARA. Banhinia Variegata, also the "Tree of Paradise." One of the loveliest of Indian trees with a dark brown smoothish bark. The leaves fall in the cold season and the large sweetly scented flowers open on the bare branches. Their colour varies from magenta, mauve, pink with crimson markings or white with a splash of yellow.

KRITAMALA. Cassia Fistula. Indian Laburnum. Also the common Bottle Flower.

KUAYRAL. Mountain Ebony.

KUJAJA. Wrightia Awtidy Senterica. A medicinal plant.

KUMUDA. A white water lily.

KUNDA. Jasmine Multiflorum.

KURAKA. Boswellia Thorifera. Olivanum Tree.

KURANDA. A plant commonly called Sakarunda.

KURUBAKA. Dronapushpi. The Drona flower. Drona meaning a vessel, cup or pot, it probably produces a gourd.

KUSHA GRASS. Demostachya Bipennata. Sacred Grass used for religious ceremonies. This grass has long stalks and pointed leaves like rushes.

KUVALA. A water lily.

L

LAKUCA. or Lakuka. Artocarpus Lacucha. The same genus as the Jack Fruit, cultivated in the plains of Northern India.

LOHDRA. Simplocos Racemosa. The bark of this tree is used as a dye.

M

MADHAVA. A Mango.

MADHAVI. Bassia Latifolia. A species of leguminous plant. Also Basil and a kind of Panic grass.

MADHUKA. Bassia Latifolia. Illipi Butter Tree. A large deciduous tree with thick grey bark found in dry rocky hill regions. Valuable for its delicious and nutritive flowers which bloom at night and fall to the ground at dawn. They taste something like figs and are much sought after by bears, birds and deer, so that the natives have to guard the trees in order to collect flowers for themselves.

MADHURA. Perennial Jasmine.

MADURA. A tree reminiscent of Cassia which has long sprays of pale pink flowers.

MALLIKA. Evening Jasmine.

MUCHUKUNDA. Pterospernum Suberifolium. A white variety of Thorn Apple.

MUCHULINDA. Possibly connected with the Muchi wood or Coral Tree.

N

NAGA. Mesua Ferrea. A small tree.
NAGAVRIKSHA. A mountain shrub.
NAKTAMALA or NAKTAMALLAKA. Caleduba Arborea or Dalbergia Arborea or Pongamia Glabra.
NALINA. Nelumbium Speciosum. A water lily.
NARCAL GRASS. Phragmites Karka Trin. A species of Reed.
NARIKELA. Coconut Palm.
NICHULA. Barringtonia Acutangola commonly called Hijjal.
NILASHOKA. An Ashoka with blue flowers.
NILOTPALA. The Blue Lotus.
NIMBA. Azadirachta Indica. A tree with bitter fruit, the leaves of which are chewed at funerals.
NIPA, NIPAKA. A species of Kadamba Tree.
NIVARA or NAIVARA. Wild Rice.
NYAGRODHA. Ficus Indica. Indian Fig Tree.

O

P

PADMA. A pink lotus.
PADMAKA. Costus Speciosus or Arabicus, a kind of Fir.
PANASA. Arto Carpus Intergrifolia. Jack-fruit Tree, bearing the largest edible fruit in the world, weighing up to 100 lbs., oblong or round and irregular. This fruit is in great demand but less favoured than the mango or plantain. This tree grows in the forests in the Western Ghats.
PARABHADRAKA. Erythrininina Fulgens. Coral Tree, which bears angular spikes of rich red blooms along its bare branches from January to March.
PATALA. Tropical evergreen climbing plant.
PATALI or PATALIKA. Bynaria Suaroleus, a tree with sweet scented blossom (possibly the red Lodhra).
PINJARA. Mesua Roxburghii.
PIPPALA. Sacred Fig Tree.
PIYALA or PRIYALA or PRYALA. Commonly called Piyal. Found in Central India. Broad-leafed Mohwah. Common oil plant. Also a vine-like plant.
PLAKSHA. Ficus Infectoria. Wavy-leafed Fig Tree.
PRIYAKANYA. Terminalia Tormentosa.
PRYANKARA. Various plants.
PUNNAGA. Rottleria Tinctoria. The flowers of this tree produce a yellow dye.
PURNA. A Cypress.
PURNASA. Sacred Basil.

Q

R

RAKTACHANDAN. The red Sandal Tree.
RAJIVA. A red Lotus.
RANJAKA. Barbadoes Pride. The Red Wood or Coral Pea Tree.

S

SALA. Shorea Robusta. The Sal Tree.
SALLAKA. Bignonia Indica. The Gum Tree.
SANGANDHIKA. The White and Blue Water-lily.
SAPTA. A kind of grass. Sacharum Cylindricum.
SAPTACCHADA. Seven-leafed Milk Plant or Poon Tree or Devil's Tree.
SAPTAPARNA. Alstonia or Echites Scholaris. Lit.: Seven-leafed Tree.
SARALA. Pinus Longifolia. A species of Pine.
SARJA. White Murdah.
SARPAT GRASS. Saccharium Bengalense Retz. (S. Sara Roxb.). One of the sugar canes.
SHAMI. Acacia Suma. This tree possesses very tough and hard wood supposed to contain fire—it is employed to kindle the sacred fires by rubbing two bits together. Also the shrub Serratula anthelmintica.
SHAIVALA. Vallisneria Octandra or Bexica. An aquatic plant.
SHALMALI. The Silk Cotton Tree.
SHIMSHAPA or SHINGSHAPA. Dattergia Sisu. An Ashoka.
SHIRASHAKA. Probably a form of fragrant Sirissa.
SHIRIBILWA, see BILWA.
SHIRISHA. Acacia Sirissa.
SHIRISHKAPIR. One of the Sirissas. Bears a small white flower which is fragrant at night. This tree yields a gum similar to Gum Arabic. Its seeds are used for opthalmic diseases and are useful in leprosy.
SHYAMA. An extensive dark-blue climber. Also Datura Metel. A Thorn apple.
SILLEA. Cephalostashyum Capitatum Munro. A large Bamboo.
SIMHAKESARA. Cassia Sianica.
SINDHUVARA. Vitex Negundo, a small tree.
SURA. A Sal tree.
SVADAMSHTRA. Astercantha Longifolia.
SYANDARA. Dalbergia Ougeninensis.

T

TAKKOLA. Pinieta Acris.
TALA. Borassus Flabelliformis. A kind of Palm.
TAMALA. Phyllanthus Emblica. The name Myrabolan is applied to the fruit which with that of another tree makes a tonic called Tregala Churan.
TILAKA. Commonly called Tila. A tree with beautiful flowers similar to the Sesamum plant.
TIMIDA. The Sesamum plant.
TIMIRA. An aquatic plant.
TIMISHA or TINISHA. A kind of pumpkin or water-melon. Also a climber with purple flowers.
TINDUKA. Diospyros Glutinosa or Diospyros Embryopteris. A sort of Ebony.
TINDURA. Persimmon.
TUNGA. Rottleria Tinctoria. Coconut.

U

UDDALA or UDDALAKA. The plant Cordia Myxa or Latifolia also Paspalum Frumentaceum. Uddalaka—pushpa—bhanjika or the " Breaking of Uddalaka flowers " is a sort of game played by people in the eastern districts.
USHIRAS. Spikenard or a grass a small Saccharum. Also the fragrant root Andropogan Muricatus.
UTPALA. Any water-lily, the blue lotus and also the plant Costus Speciosum.

V

VANIRA. Calamus Rotang. A Reed.
VANDHIRA. Memisa Sirissa.
VANJULA. Hibiscus Mutabilis.
VARANA. Craetova Tapia. A sacred medicinal Tree.
VASANTA KUSUMA. Cordia Myxa or Latifolia. " Having blossoms in Spring ".
VASANTA DUTA. Gaetnera Racemosa. A creeper. Also a trumpet flower.
VASANTA DRU. A Mango.
VATA. A species of Banian.
VETRA. An ornamental Palm.
VETTAS. The Rattan Cane.
VIBHITA or VIBHITAKA. The Tree 'Terminalia Belerica.'
VIJAKA. The Citron Tree.

W

X

Y

Z

WEAPONS

A

AGNEYA. The Fire Weapon.
AINDRA. Indra's Weapon.
AISHIKA. An Arrow.
ALAKSHYA. A Weapon that cannot be followed in its course.
ANKUSHA. A Goad.
ARDEA. The Web (See Shuska).
ARHANI. The Thunderbolt.
AVANAGMUKHA. Weapon with a bent or curved head.
AVARANA. The Weapon of Protection.

B

BHINDIPALA. A short Dart or Arrow thrown from the hand or shot through a tube. Also an iron Spear or Dart or a stone fastened to a string.
BIBHITAKA. A Weapon that breaks through, pierces or penetrates.
BRAHMA-PASHA. Net or noose of Brahma (Pasha meaning a rope).
BRAHMASHIRA. Brahma-headed, probably four-headed.
BUSHUNDI. A kind of Mace.

C

D

DANDA or DUNDA. Lit.: Staff. As a Weapon, the Rod of Punishment. ("Dundadhara" being the title of the God of Death, who bears the "Rod of Chastisement.")
DARANA. A Weapon that tears or splits asunder.
DARPANA. The Drying-up Weapon.
DASHAKSHA. The Ten-eyed Weapon.
DASHA-SHIRSHA. The Ten-headed Weapon.
DHANA. The Weapon of Wealth.
DHANYA. The Rice Weapon.
DHARMA DISCUS or DHARMA PALA. The Noose of the God of Justice.
DHARMA-NABHA. The Weapon of sacred navel.

DHARMA-PASHA. The Weapon that has the power of entangling the Foe.
DHRISHTA. The active Weapon.
DHRITI. The Weapon of forbearance.
DISC OF DHARMA. The Disc of Virtue.
DISC OF KALA. The Disc of Time in the form of death.
DITYA. The Titan.
DRIRNABHA. The Weapon of firm navel.
DUNDA-NABHA. The Dunda-navelled.

E

F

G

GANDHARVA. The Weapon of the Gandharvas.

H

HALA. A Weapon shaped like a plough-share.
HAYA-SHIRA. The Horse-headed Weapon.

I

ISHIKA. The ardent Weapon.

J

JYOTISHMA. The luminous Weapon.

K

KAMARUCHI. A Weapon that is bright and able to go where it will.
KAMARUPA. A Weapon able to assume any form at will.
KANDARPA. A Weapon creating sex desire.
KANKANA. A Weapon protecting the side, possibly a kind of armour.
KAPALA. A Helmet.
KARAVIRA. The Weapon of the valiant hand.
KARNIS. Arrows with two sides resembling ears.

KASHA. A Whip.
KOUMODAKI. A Weapon giving joy to the earth.
KROUNCHA or KRAUNCHA. A Weapon named after the bird of that name.
KSHAPANI. An oar or net. Something that destroys the destroyer.
KSHURA. An arrow with a razor-like edge.
KSHURAPRA. A Crescent-shaped arrow.
KUNTALA. A Sickle-shaped Weapon.
KUTA. A Poniard.
KUTAMUDGARA. A concealed Weapon, similar to a Hammer.

L

LAKSHYA. A Weapon that can be followed in its course.
LOHITA MUKHI. The Bloody-mouthed Weapon.

M

MAHA-NABHA. The Large-navelled Weapon.
MAHA VAHU. The Great-armed or handed Weapon.
MALI. The Chain Weapon. That which holds or binds.
MANAVA. The Weapon of Manu.
MATHANA. The Weapon that inflicts injury and suffering.
MAYADHARA. The Great Deception or Illusion.
MODANA. The Weapon of Inebriation.
MOHA. The Weapon that causes loss of Consciousness.
MOHAN. The Weapon of attraction.
MUSHALA or MOUSHALA. A Club.

N

NALIKA. An Iron Arrow or Dart; also a Pike or Javelin.
NANDANA. The Joy-producing Weapon.
NARACHA. An Iron Arrow.
NARAYANA. Lit.: " Residing in water ".
NIRASHYA. The Discourager.
NISHKALI. The Peaceful.
NISHTRINSHA. A Sword, Scimitar or Falchion more than thirty fingers in lengt.
NIVATA KAVACHA. Impenetrable Armour.

O

GLOSSARY

P

PAISHA ASTRA. The Ghostly Weapon, belonging to the Pisachas, ghosts or demons.
PARAMO DARA ASTRA. The Supreme Clearing Weapon.
PARASAVA. An Axe or Hatchet.
PARIGHA. An Iron Bludgeon or Iron-studded Club.
PASHUPATI. The Weapon sacred to Shiva.
PATH. A kind of Sword.
PINAKA. The Bow sacred to Shiva.
PITRIYA. The Weapon of the Pittris (Ancestors).
PRAMA THANA. The Churner.
PRASHA. A Bearded Dart.
PRASHAMANA. The Weapon of Destruction.
PRASHWAPRANA. A Weapon dealing with the vital airs.
PRATIHARDARA. That which neutralizes the effects of other weapons.
PURANG MUKHA. A Weapon that has its face averted.

Q

R

RABHASA. The Desolator.
RATI. The Weapon of Enjoyment.
RUCHIRA. The Approving Weapon.
RUDRA. The Weapon sacred to Rudra (Shiva).

S

SALA. An Arrow with short leads.
SAMVARTTA. The Covering Weapon.
SANDHANA. The Arm Weapon.
SANTAPANA. The Weapon that scorches or burns up. One of Kamadeva's Arrows.
SARICHIMALI. That which has force or power.
SARPA-NATHA. The Weapon sacred to the Lord of Serpents.
SATYA-ASTRA. The Weapon of Existence.
SATYAKIRTI. The Justly-famed.
SAURA. The Heroic Weapon.
SHAKUNA. The Vulture-shaped Weapon.
SHANKARA. The Cause of Welfare. A Weapon of Shiva's.
SHARNGA. The Bow of Vishnu.

SHATAGNI. Either a spiked mace or a stone set round with iron spikes.
SHATAVAKTRA. The Hundred-mouthed Weapon.
SHATODARA. The Hundred-bellied Weapon.
SHITESU. A sharp Arrow.
SHOSHANA. A Weapon used to dry up water and counteract the Varshana Weapon.
SHUCHIVANU. The Pure-handed Weapon.
SHUSHKA. The Dry Weapon.
SILIUMKHA. An Arrow resembling a heron's feathers.
SINHADANSHTRA. A Weapon resembling lion's teeth.
SOMASTRA. The Dew Weapon.
SOUMANVA. The Weapon of the controlled mind.
SUNABHUKA. The Fine-navelled Weapon.
SWAPANA. To do with the act of sleeping.
SWANABHUKA. The Rich-navelled Weapon.

T

TOMARA. An Iron bar, crow-bar, lance or javelin.
TRIMBHAKA. The Gaper.
TWASHTRA. A Weapon possessing the power of Twashtra, the Architect of the Gods.

U

USIRATNA. A Scimitar.

V

VARSHANA. The Rain-producing Weapon.
VARUNA PASHA. The Net of Varuna.
VATRA. The Weapon caused by the Wind (Vatri—The Blower).
VATSADANTA. A Weapon resembling a calf's teeth.
VAYUVYA. A Weapon having the power of the Wind.
VIDDANA. The Weapon that rends or tears asunder.
VIDHUTA. The Strongly-vibrating Weapon.
VIPATRA. A Weapon resembling the Karavira.
VIDYA DHARA. The Weapon of the Demi-Gods.
VILAPANA. The Weapon causing wailing.
VIMALA. The Pure.
VINIDRA. The Somniferous.
VISHNU DISCUS. The Discus of Vishnu.

W

X

Y

YAMIYA. The Weapon of Death.
YOGANDHARA. The United.

Z

THE RAMAYANA OF VALMIKI

Translated by

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Vol. III.

YUDDHA KANDA

UTTARA KANDA

SHANTI SADAN
29 CHEPSTOW VILLAS
LONDON, W.11
1959

Printed in Great Britain
at the BURLEIGH PRESS, *Lewins Mead* BRISTOL

CONTENTS

Book VI—Yuddha Kanda

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

Book VII—Uttara Kanda

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

BOOK VI.

YUDDHA KANDA

CHAPTER I

Rama felicitates Hanuman.—His Perplexities

HEARING Hanuman's faithful narrative, Rama, full of joy, said: "The mission that Hanuman has carried out is of great significance and the most arduous in the world; none other could have achieved it, even in thought! Other than Garuda and Vayu, verily I know of no being able to cross the mighty ocean save Hanuman himself. Neither Gods, Danavas, Yakshas, Gandharvas, Uragas nor Rakshasas could enter Lanka which is protected by Ravana and, did any in his presumption enter it, would he return alive? Who is able to capture that citadel by assault, that has been rendered inaccessible by its rampart of titans, but one whose courage and valour are equal to Hanuman's? Hanuman has carried out this important service for Sugriva by manifesting a strength equal to his audacity. That servant to whom his master confides a difficult task and who acquits himself with zeal is said to be a superior man. The one who is ready and capable but who yet does no more than his sovereign exacts from him, in order to render himself agreeable, is called an ordinary man, but he who is well and able and yet does not carry out the command of his king, is said to be the least of men. Hanuman has fulfilled the task confided to him unfalteringly, to the satisfaction of Sugriva; in consequence, through the discovery of Vaidehi's retreat by this faithful messenger, the House of Raghu, the valiant Lakshmana and I have been saved. Yet even so my heart is heavy, since I am not able to requite the bearer of these good tidings in a fitting manner. Let me at least embrace the magnanimous Hanuman since, in the present circumstances, this is all that is permitted to me!"

Having spoken thus, Rama, trembling with joy, clasped Hanuman in his arms, who, master of himself, his mission fulfilled, had returned.

Then the great Scion of the House of Raghu, after reflecting awhile, added in the presence of Sugriva, King of the Monkeys:

"Though the discovery of Sita has been accomplished, yet when I behold that vast ocean, I am plunged in despondency. How will the army of the monkeys be able to reach the southern shore, crossing over that impassable stretch of water? Having received these tidings of Vaidehi, what can now be done to take the monkeys to the further side of the ocean?"

In the anguish that possessed him, the mighty Rama, scourge of his foes, having spoken to Hanuman, was filled with apprehension and became absorbed in thought.

CHAPTER 2

Sugriva consoles Rama

RAMA, the son of Dasaratha, being plunged in despair, the fortunate Sugriva spoke to him in consoling accents, saying: "Why dost thou give way to sorrow like a common man, O Hero? Shake off this melancholy as do ungrateful men the recognition of favours accorded to them. After the tidings thou hast received and now that the haunt of thine enemy is known to thee, I see no cause for thine anxiety, O Raghava. Prudent and versed in the scriptures, intelligent and cultured as thou art, do thou as one master of himself, banish these unworthy fears that are the obstacles to success. We shall cross the sea where monstrous crocodiles abound, take Lanka by assault and slay thine adversary! The pusillanimous and despondent man, whose mind is agitated by grief, accomplishes nothing worth while and rushes towards destruction.

"In order to please thee, these monkey warriors who are brave and skilled are ready to enter a blazing fire! Observing their martial ardour I am filled with confidence; do thou test my courage by suffering me to bring back Sita to thee after having slain thine adversary Ravana of evil exploits. But first construct a bridge for us that we may approach that city of the Lord of the Titans. The instant we behold Lanka, built on the summit

of Trikuta, Ravana is slain as it were, but unless a bridge is thrown over that formidable domain of Varuna, the sea, the Gods and Asuras themselves with their leaders cannot force an entry into Lanka.

"When that dyke on the waters in the vicinity of Lanka is constructed and all the troops shall have passed over it, Ravana is, as it were, already defeated, so valiant are these monkey warriors who are able to change their form at will.

"Enough of this faint-hearted attitude, fatal to any enterprise, O King. In this world, man is unbraced by sorrow; that which must be done should be accomplished with resolution, it is assuredly expedient to act swiftly! For this enterprise, O Great Sage, unite energy with virtue, for, if it be a question of loss or death, the great warriors, thy peers, see grief as the consumer of their resources. Thou art the foremost of the wise and versed in all the scriptures; with allies such as I am, thy victory is assured! In sooth I see none in the Three Worlds able to withstand thee in combat when thou art armed with thy bow! With the success of thine enterprise in the hands of the monkeys, thou canst not fail. When thou hast crossed the imperishable ocean thou shalt see Sita ere long. Desist from this melancholy that thou hast allowed to invade thee and yield to thy legitimate indignation, O Prince. Unadventurous warriors never win honour but all fear the wrathful. It is for the purpose of crossing the formidable ocean, the Lord of Rivers, that thou hast come hither with us; now with thy resourceful mind ponder on it. Once the ocean has been crossed by my forces, know victory to be certain; verily when the whole army has passed over the sea, our triumph is assured!

"The monkeys, those courageous soldiers, who are able to change their form at pleasure, will crush their opponents with an avalanche of rocks and trees. Whatever the means employed, once we have crossed Varuna's domain, Ravana is as dead in mine eyes, O Destroyer of Thy Foes! But of what use are all these words? Thy victory is assured and the portents, which I perceive, fill my heart with joy."

CHAPTER 3

Hanuman describes the Strength of Lanka to Rama

THESE words of Sugriva, judicious and full of good sense, pleased Kakutstha who said to Hanuman :—

" By the power of mine austerities, I am well able to cross the ocean by throwing a bridge over it or even drying it up. What are the fortifications of this inaccessible Lanka ? Describe them fully to me, I wish to hear all about them as if I had myself beheld them, O Monkey. How are its gates manned ; what is the strength of the army ; what kind of moats surround it and how are the retreats of the titans constructed ? Thou didst explore Lanka at thy leisure when opportunity arose, now in the light of thine observations give me exact and complete information thereon."

Thus interrogated by Rama, Hanuman, the Son of Maruta, the most eloquent of narrators, said :—

" Hear, O King, I will tell thee the extent of the defences, of the moats and the number of troops guarding that city. I will describe to thee the opulence of those titans and the great prosperity of their capital due to Ravana's austerities ; I will tell thee also of the formidable ocean and the many regiments of infantry and the strength of the cavalry ".

After this preamble, the foremost of monkeys began to relate lucidly everything he knew and said :—

" Filled with happy people, Lanka abounds in elephants intoxicated with Mada juice and is swarming with chariots and titans. It has four immense gateways that are extremely high and furnished with strong doors which are closed with massive iron bars. Catapults, darts and stones are placed near at hand, capable of repelling the assaults of the enemy and the valiant titans have heaped in readiness, formidable spears in their hundreds.

" The city is encircled by a high golden wall difficult to scale, lined within with precious gems, coral, emerald and pearl.

On all sides awe-inspiring moats of great splendour, filled with icy water, have been dug, which are deep and abounding in crocodiles and fishes. At the entrance to these dykes there are four long draw-bridges furnished with innumerable weapons and five great cannons are placed round about which defend the entries against the approach of the enemy, whose battalions would be flung by these engines of war into the moats on every side. The most important of these bastions, impossible to force, is of unsuperable strength and dazzling with its pillars and fulcrums of gold.

"Endowed with great physical strength, O Prince, Ravana is avid for combat, ever on the alert and constantly reviewing his forces. Lanka is therefore impregnable, it is a celestial citadel that inspires terror. Surrounded by water, built on a mountain with its fourfold defences[1], it is situated on the other side of the impassable ocean, O Rama, where no vessel can approach it, as it offers no harbourage anywhere. Built on the summit of an inaccessible rock, Lanka, where horses and elephants abound, resembling the City of the Gods, is extremely difficult to conquer. With its moats and Shataghnis, its engines of war of every kind, that capital of the wicked Ravana is unique.

"The eastern gate is defended by ten thousand men, all skilled warriors armed with spears, the foremost of swordsmen; the southern gate is guarded by a hundred thousand warriors, there a whole army of seasoned fighters is assembled; ten thousand troops armed with swords and shields, all accustomed to the wielding of weapons, defend the western gate; the northern gate is protected by a million men who are mounted in chariots or who ride on horses; they are the sons of distinguished families. Titans to the number of hundreds and thousands occupy the centre of the city with one million tested troops in addition.

"I have destroyed the ramparts and filled up the moats and, having torn down the walls, have set fire to the town, therefore, if we can find some means of crossing Varuna's domain, the city is ours; let the monkeys deliberate on the matter.

"Angada, Dvivida, Mainda, Jambavan, Panasa, Nala and the General Nila will fall upon Ravana's capital with its hills,

[1] See glossary under fourfold . . .

woods, moats, archways and ramparts and bring Sita back to thee, O Raghava, what need is there of the rest of the monkeys? Come, give the command quickly to the whole army of these valiant monkeys and, at a propitious hour, let us set out!"

CHAPTER 4

The Army reaches the Shores of the Sea

HAVING listened to the judicious and well-reasoned speech of Hanuman, the illustrious Rama, a true hero, spoke saying:—

"Now that thou hast told me everything concerning Lanka, that dread citadel of the terrible demons, I shall make preparations to destroy it without delay, this is the truth!

"O Sugriva, be gracious enough to order our departure; the sun is in mid-heaven and has entered the constellation of victory[1]. As for Sita's abductor, he shall not escape, wherever he may go! When Sita learns of my approach, her hopes will revive, as one who, having drunk poison and on the point of death, quaffs the nectar of immortality.

"The northern planet Phalguni is in the ascendent and will be in conjunction with the Hasta Star to-morrow. Let us depart, O Sugriva, and let all the troops accompany us; every portent is favourable! Having slain Ravana, I shall return with Sita, the daughter of Janaka. My right eye-lid is twitching which is an indication that victory is near and that my purpose will be accomplished."

At these words, King Sugriva and Lakshmana, bowing low, paid obeisance to Rama, who, full of faith and versed in the moral law, spoke once more, saying:—

"Let General Nila with a guard of a hundred thousand intrepid warriors go before the army to explore the way. He should lead his forces speedily by the path where fruit, roots, shade, fresh water and honey abound. In their wickedness, the demons are capable of destroying the roots and fruits and

[1] Abhijit. (See Glossary.)

vitiating the water on the way. Keep them at a distance and be on your guard! Let those dwellers of the woods search the ravines and dense thickets in the forest in order to discover the ambushes of the enemy.

"Those who are weak should remain here for your task is formidable and demands endurance; therefore let the foremost of the monkeys gifted with prodigious prowess lead the vanguard, composed of hundreds and thousands of monkeys, resembling the waters of the sea. Let Gaja who is like unto a hill and the exceedingly powerful Gavaya and Gavaksha go ahead like proud bulls leading the kine. The leader of monkeys, Rishabha, skilled in leaping, should protect the right flank of the army and the fiery Gandhamadana, resembling an elephant in mustha, should defend the left flank. I myself, mounted on the shoulders of Hanuman, like Indra on Airavata, will march in the centre of my troops in order to encourage them. Lakshmana who resembles death itself, will ride on the shoulders of Angada, as Kuvera, the Lord of Creatures and God of Wealth on Sarvabhauma. Let the mighty Lord of the Bears, Jambavan with Sushena and the monkey Vegadarshin, all three, protect the rear of the army."

Hearing Raghava's words, Sugriva, commander of the forces, gave his orders to the monkeys. Thereupon a multitude of monkeys, eager to fight, issued from the caves and mountain peaks, leaping on all sides. Honoured by the King of the Monkeys, as also by Lakshmana, the virtuous Rama, accompanied by hundreds and thousands of monkeys resembling elephants, set out in a southerly direction and under Sugriva's command, that great army in high spirits, betraying its delight, escorted him.

Guarding the flanks of the army and pressing forward, they ran towards the south, leaping on all sides, emitting leonine roars, growling and shouting, feeding on honey and delicious fruits, brandishing great trees and flowering shrubs. In their pugnacity, some lifted their fellows up and threw them down or climbed on each others backs vying with one another in turning somersaults.

"We will slay Ravana with all his nocturnal rangers!" Thus did those monkeys roar in the presence of Rama.

Going in advance of the army, Rishabha, the valiant Nila and also Kumuda cleared the way with the assistance of innumerable monkeys. In the centre, the King Sugriva, Rama and Lakshmana, scourges of their foes, were surrounded by countless redoutable warriors. The courageous monkey, Shatabali, at the head of ten kotis, was, in himself, sufficient to protect the entire host of monkeys! With an escort of a hundred kotis, Kesarin and Panasa, Gaja and Arka with their battalions protected the flanks of that army, whilst Sushena and Jambavan surrounded by a multitude of bears, having placed Sugriva at the head, formed the rearguard. The valiant General Nila, a lion among monkeys, who excelled in marching, constantly inspected the ranks, and Valimukha, Prajangha, Jambha and the monkey Rabhasa went about everywhere encouraging the Plavamgamas.

Whilst those lions among monkeys advanced on every side proud of their strength, they beheld the great Mountain Sahya crowned with hundreds of trees and lakes and lovely pools covered with flowers.

Under the command of Rama of searing wrath, skirting the precincts of cities and public highways, that vast and terrible army of monkeys, like the ocean tide, surged forward with a thunderous sound. At the side of the son of Dasaratha, those heroic monkeys bounded forward with agility, like swift steeds urged on by the spur. And those foremost of men, borne on the shoulders of the monkeys, appeared beautiful like the sun and moon, in conjunction with those two great planets, Rahu and Ketu, and honoured by the King of the Monkeys and Lakshmana, Rama accompanied by his army, proceeded towards the south.

Then Lakshmana, mounted on Angada's shoulders, spoke to Rama who was accomplishing his design, in sweet accents, saying :—

"Having regained Vaidehi and slain Ravana her abductor, thus fulfilling thy purpose, thou wilt return to Ayodhya, who,[1] too, will be gratified. I perceive auspicious omens in the heavens and on the earth, O Descendant of Raghu, indicating the success of thine enterprise! A favourable wind blows

[1] That is the presiding Deity of the City.

behind the army, that is soft, health-giving and auspicious; birds and beasts emit cheerful and sonorous sounds; all the quarters are serene and the sun shines clearly. Ushanas, Bhrigu's son, too, wears an auspicious aspect for thee, and the pole star is unaccompanied by adverse planets, the seven Rishis, pure and brilliant, circumambulating it. Before us shines the grandsire of the high-souled Ikshvakus, the immaculate Trishanku accompanied by his priest; and the twin Vishakas, our racial star, gleam free from obstruction.

"Nairrita, the ruling star of the titans, is badly aspected and in opposition to the rising planet Dhumaketu, presaging the overthrow of the titans. Those about to die, in their last hour, become a prey to Graha. The water of the lakes is fresh and tastes sweet, the woods are laden with fruit, fragrant breezes blow softly and the trees are flowering out of season, O Lord! The army of the monkeys looks splendid in its formations, like the Celestial Host at the destruction of Taraka. Surveying the whole scene, O Noble One, thou shouldst experience supreme delight!"

Thus did Saumitri speak in gay tones to his elder brother in order to console him and meantime the army of the monkeys advanced, covering the earth. The dust raised by those mighty bears and monkeys, furnished with nails and claws, enveloped the whole earth and the splendour of the sun was obscured. Like a mass of cloud enveloping the sky, that monkey army advanced in solid formation encompassing the southern region. As they pressed on mile on mile, crossing the rivers and streams against the current, they traversed many leagues in one stretch. Resting by lakes of pure water, passing over mountains covered with forests, across plains, through woods laden with fruit, skirting them or passing through the centre, they went on, covering the entire earth, and their countenances manifesting joy, they ran with the swiftness of the wind.

All those monkeys were zealous in Rama's service, each vying with the other in high spirits, vigour and prowess. Some, proud of their youth and supple limbs, increased their pace, running with extreme speed and executing handsprings and some of those rangers of the woods shouted 'Kila! Kila!' lashing their tails and stamping on the earth whilst others with

upraised arms broke off the trees and rocks here and there or climbed to the summit of the mountains like true mountaineers. Emitting loud cries and roaring, they frequently tore down handfuls of creepers with their thighs. In their energy, with their jaws set, some juggled with rocks and trees. It was by hundreds and thousands and millions that these formidable monkeys covered the earth with their splendour; and that great army of monkeys, full of energy, proceeding under Sugriva's orders, eager for battle and anxious to deliver Sita, did not linger even for an instant.

Then Rama, seeing the Sahira and Malaya Mountains with their dense woodlands frequented by various kinds of wild animals and marvellous forests, streams and rivers, went towards them, and the monkeys broke down Champaka, Tilaka, Cuta, Praseka, Sindubaraka, Tinisha, Karavira, Ashoka, Karanja, Plaksha, Nyagrodha, Jambuka and Amlaka Trees, and, seated on those enchanting plateaus, the forest trees shaken by the wind covered them with flowers.

A soft breeze, fresh and perfumed with sandal, blew while the bees hummed in the nectar scented woods. From this mountain, rich in ore, the dust raised by those monkeys enveloped that immense army on all sides.

On the smiling mountain slopes, Ketaka Trees, Sinduvara, charming Vasanti, scented Madhavi, clumps of Jasmine, Shiribilva, Madhuka, Vanjula, Vankula, Ranjaka, Tilaka Nagavriksha, all in flower, with Cuta, Patalika, Kovidara, Muchulinda, Arjuna, Shimshapa, Kutaja, Hintala, Tinisha, Shurnakha, Nipaka, the blue Ashoka, Sarala, Ankola and Padmaka Trees bloomed and teemed with monkeys disporting themselves there. Enchanting lakes and pools, frequented by waterfowl, ducks and herons, were to be found on that mountain, which was the haunt of boars, deer, bears, hyenas, lions and tigers inspiring terror, and innumerable venomous snakes infested it. Kumudas, Utpalas and many other flowers embellished the lakes, and flocks of birds of various kinds sang on that mountain side.

Having bathed in those waters and quenched their thirst, the monkeys began to disport themselves and splashing one another, climbing the mountain, they plucked the delicious

fruits as fragrant as 'Amrita' and the roots and flowers from the trees. Yellow as honey themselves, they, delighted, feasted on the combs, a 'drona' in size, which were suspended from the trees, and, shaking the lovely branches and letting them spring back again, they tore down the creepers; some drunk with nectar, dancing joyfully as they continued on their way; some climbed the trees, others quenched their thirst and the whole earth, covered with monkeys, resembled a field of ripe corn.

Reaching the Mahendra Mountain, the long-armed Rama, whose eyes resembled lotus petals, climbed to the summit adorned with various trees and from that peak, the elder son of King Dasaratha beheld that vast sea with its rising waves full of fish and turtle.

Having crossed the Sahya and Malaya Mountains, the army halted in their ranks along the shores of the sea with its thundering waves. Then that foremost of men, Rama, descended from the heights and accompanied by Lakshmana and Sugriva, quickly entered a lovely wood on the shores of the ocean and reaching that immense strand strewn with boulders, washed by the billowing waves, he spoke thus:—

"O Sugriva, we have reached the abode of Varuna; now we should consider the matter with which we were formerly preoccupied. This ocean, the Lord of Rivers, with its vast expanse, is impossible to cross unless some special course be adopted. Let us camp here therefore and deliberate on the means by which we can transport the army to the further shore."

Speaking thus, that long-armed hero, who had been rendered desolate by Sita's abduction, approached the sea and issued orders for the troops quartering.

"Let the whole army pitch their camp on the shore, O Lion among Monkeys! The time has come to take counsel and devise some way to cross the main; let every leader remain with his forces and, under no pretext whatever, shall he leave them; meantime they should find out if any ambush has been laid by the enemy."

At Rama's command, Sugriva, assisted by Lakshmana, caused his forces to camp on the shore which was covered with trees and the monkey host looked resplendent like a second ocean

whose waves were yellow as honey. Reaching that wooded shore those lions of monkeys encamped, eager to reach the further side of the ocean; and the tumult caused by those forces pitching their tents could be heard above the roaring of the sea. That vast army of monkeys, commanded by Sugriva, ranged in three divisions, were deeply concerned with the accomplishment of Rama's mission and, from the shore where they were stationed, the monkey host gazed with delight on the vast ocean lashed by the tempest. Then those leaders of monkeys surveyed that abode of Varuna of limitless expanse, whose distant shore was inhabited by titans. Rendered formidable by the ferocity of its sharks and crocodiles, that ocean, with its foaming waves at the close of day and the approach of night, appeared to laugh and dance. When the moon rose, whose image was reflected limitlessly in its bosom, the ocean surged, swarming with gigantic sharks, whales and great fish, strong like the tempest, and it was fathomless, abounding in serpents of flaming coils and many aquatic animals and reefs. In that ocean, difficult to cross, whose ways were impassable, haunted by titans, the waves, in which sharks and sea monsters swarmed, rose and fell joyfully, whipped into motion by the breeze.

Emitting sparks and turbulent with its gleaming reptiles, the ocean, that dread refuge of the enemies of the Gods, the eternal region of hell, resembled the sky and there seemed no difference between them. The waters simulated the firmament and the firmament the waters, both manifesting the same appearance with the stars above and the pearls below with which they were filled and, one with its racing clouds and the other with its squadrons of waves, caused the sea and sky to look identical.

As wave clashed against wave without pause, the King of Rivers emitted a terrific clamour like the sound of the beating of great gongs in the sky. With its murmuring waves, its innumerable pearls and its monsters as it were pursuing it like a pack of hounds, the ocean, in the grip of a hurricane, seemed to leap excitedly.

And the magnanimous monkeys surveyed that ocean lashed by the winds and the waves which, whipped by its blast, seemed to groan. Struck with astonishment, those monkeys regarded the sea with its dashing waves, rolling on and on.

CHAPTER 5

Rama is afflicted when thinking of Sita

On the northern shore, the army under the command of Nila halted and the two generals, Mainda and Dvivida, foremost among the monkeys, patrolled up and down and on all sides in order to protect the monkey host.

The army being thus encamped on the shores of the Lord of the Waters, Rama, observing Lakshmana standing at his side, said to him :—

" Sorrow invariably decreases with the passing of time but in the absence of my beloved, mine increases daily ! Not that my sufferings are caused by separation from my companion nor my misfortune by her abduction, what I deplore is that her youth is slipping away. O Breeze, speed to that place where my beloved is and, having caressed her, touch me, thus causing me the same delight that a weary traveller experiences when gazing on the moon ! That which consumes my limbs as though I had swallowed poison, is the cry of my dear one, while being borne away, ' Help, O Thou who art my defender ! ' With my separation from her as the coals and my thoughts of her as the shimmering flames, the fire of my love consumes my body day and night !

" O Lakshmana, remain here while I plunge into the sea ere I sleep, so that the fire of my distress shall cease from tormenting me. It is enough that she and I sleep on the same earth. As dry land draws nourishment for its vegetation from marshy ground, so do I exist in the knowledge that Sita still lives ! O When shall I, having overcome mine enemies, behold her of graceful limbs, whose eyes resemble lotus petals, the equal of Shri herself ? When, gently raising her lotus-like face with its ravishing lips and teeth, shall I drink in her glances, as a sick man the nectar of immortality ? When will that playful maiden embrace me, her round and quivering breasts like unto Tala

fruits pressed against my body, like sovereignty united with prosperity ?

" Alas ! Though I am her support, that dark-eyed princess, who has fallen among the titans, resembles an orphan ! How can it be that the daughter of Janaka, my beloved, is now in the midst of titans, she, the daughter-in-law of Dasaratha ?

" When I have put those demons to flight, Sita will live anew as the autumnal moon shines forth again when the clouds are scattered. By nature slender, Sita, on account of grief, fasting and circumstance, is now a shadow of her former self.

" When, with my shafts piercing the breast of that King of Titans, shall I empty my heart of sorrow ? When shall I behold the virtuous Sita, resembling a daughter of the Gods, her arms encircling my neck, shedding tears of joy ? When, like a soiled garment, shall I discard the pain born of my separation from Maithili ? "

As the sagacious Rama was thus lamenting, the day declined and the disc of the sun, diminishing slowly, disappeared below the horizon. Thereupon Rama, whom Lakshmana sought to console, his mind still engaged in the thought of Sita, whose eyes were as large as lotus petals, distracted by grief, performed his evening devotions.

CHAPTER 6

Ravana consults his Subjects

In the face of the terrible and awe-inspiring feat executed in Lanka by Hanuman who was the equal of Indra in prowess, the King of the Titans, discomfited, with bowed head addressed his subjects, saying :—

" Lanka, hitherto inaccessible, has been laid waste by a mere monkey who has had converse with the daughter of Janaka, Sita. Overthrowing the palaces and slaying the foremost of the titans, he has turned the city upside down, such is Hanuman's achievement ! What should I do now ? May prosperity attend you ! What plan do you consider fitting for me to

adopt first? Say what you hold to be proper for us to do and which will be to our advantage!

"The wise affirm that good counsel is the root of victory, that is why, O Brave Ones, I desire to consult you concerning Rama.

"There are three kinds of men in the world, the good, the bad and the mediocre. I will describe the qualities and defects of them all to you:—

"He, who in his deliberations consults experienced counsellors, his friends with whom he shares common interests, his relatives and his superiors and then pursues his design with energy and the help of God, is considered to be the foremost of men.

"He, who enters into deliberation and pursues his duty by himself single-handedly, accomplishing that which should be accomplished, is considered a mediocre man.

"He, who fails to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of a matter and refuses God's aid, merely saying 'I shall do it', disregards his duty and is considered the least of men!

"Just as there are always those who are superior, those who are mediocre and those who are inferior among men, so there exists also good, bad and indifferent counsel.

"That judgement which is given after a clear-sighted examination of the question and to which, re-inforced by scriptural authority, the counsellors agree, is considered excellent.

"Those deliberations, where unanimity is finally reached after innumerable discussions, are considered mediocre, and those in which each person continues to stand by his own opinion and opposes those of others and where no conclusion can be reached, are considered pernicious. Therefore an undertaking that follows on wise deliberation will succeed.

"You, who are all eminently sagacious, must decide what should be done and I will subscribe to it. Rama, surrounded by thousands of heroic monkeys, is advancing on Lanka to exterminate us. Undoubtedly Raghava will cross the ocean with ease by virtue of his natural powers and be followed by his younger brother and the monkey host. He is able to dry up the sea through his valour or he may use some other means (to bridge the ocean). In view of Rama's attack on you with those monkeys, do you devise some plan to protect the city and the army!"

CHAPTER 7

The Titans persuade Ravana to make War and remind him of his former Exploits

HEARING the words of Ravana, their lord and master, all those powerful titans, in their ignorance, instilled him with contempt for the enemy and with joined palms, offered him ill-considered advice, saying :—

" O King, we possess a vast army furnished with maces, spears, swords, lances, harpoons and barbed darts, why art thou apprehensive ? Didst thou not enter Bhogavati, having overcome the Serpent Race in war ? Didst thou not subdue Dhanada, who inhabited the summit of Mt Kailasha, surrounded as he was by Yakshas, creating a terrible carnage amongst them ? Though he regarded himself as the Lord of Men and prided himself on his friendship with Mahadeva, in thy wrath thou didst vanquish him on the field of battle.

" O Foremost among the Titans, Maya, the Lord of the Danavas in fear gave his daughter to thee in wedlock and thou didst also subjugate the powerful and arrogant giant, Madhu, the joy of Kumbhinasi ! Descending into the nether regions thou didst defeat the Serpents Vasuki, Takshaka, Shankha and Jati despite their irresistible power, courage and the boons conferred on them, O Lord ! After fighting for a whole year, confident though they were in their own strength, thou didst force them to submit to thy yoke and learnt the science of magic from them, O King of the Titans, Vanquisher of thyFoes !

" O Great Hero, the valiant sons of Varuna were defeated by thee in the open field as also the fourfold army attending on them, and thou didst descend into the vast ocean, that dark region, whose sceptre is the aquatic world, his crown the Shalmali Tree, his noose the great billows, his serpents the attendants of Yama, who is irresistible in his feverish and fearful motion and thou didst win a glorious victory there, overcoming Death and filling all thy subjects with joy.

The earth was peopled with innumerable and valiant warriors, equal to Indra in prowess, resembling giant trees, yet thou didst destroy those invincible heroes! Raghava is neither their equal in courage, virtue nor in might! Yet do thou remain here, O Great King, why fatigue thyself? Indrajita is able to exterminate those monkeys single-handed. That prince, O Great Sovereign, returning from a sacrifice to Maheshwara, who is surpassed by none, received a boon from him not easily obtainable in this world and, approaching that divine sea, whose fish are lances and spears, which abounds in weapons for its trees, whose turtles are the elephants and whose frogs are the teeming horses, whose cetaceans are the Adityas and Maruts, its great serpents the Vasus, its waters the chariots, steeds and elephants, the sandy banks its infantry, that vast ocean of the Celestial Hosts, Indrajita approached, in order to bear away their king and bring him to Lanka. Thereafter that Monarch was liberated by the command of the Grandsire of the World and the Vanquisher[1] of Shambara and Vritra returned to his abode where all the Gods paid homage to him.

" Therefore let thy son, Indrajita, go forth and destroy the army of the monkeys and Rama also, O King; it is not worthy of thee to imagine harm can come from common persons, such thoughts should not even enter thy mind for assuredly thou shalt bring about Rama's end!"

CHAPTER 8

The boasting of Ravana's Generals

THEN the heroic general, the Titan Prahasta, who resembled a dark cloud, joined his palms together and expressed himself thus :—

" We are able to overcome the Devas, Danavas, Gandharvas, Pisachas, Patagas and Uragas in the open field, how much more those two mortals!

" Under the influence of liquor and trusting in our own strength, we suffered ourselves to be deceived by Hanuman but as long as

[1] Indra, King of the Gods.

I live, that ranger of the woods will not enter here again alive, I shall sweep the land surrounded by the sea clean of monkeys together with its hills, forests and jungles; thou hast but to issue the command! I shall rid thee of that monkey, O Ranger of the Night and thou shalt not have to suffer on account of thine offence.[1]"

Thereafter Durmukha, in his turn, spoke in measured tones, saying :—

" Assuredly we shall not tolerate this outrage that he has committed against us all. The devastation of the city and the palaces and the insult offered to our sovereign by this monkey shall be avenged by me. Setting out alone, I shall exterminate those monkeys, whether they have taken refuge in the dreadful deep, in heaven or in hell!"

Then the powerful Vajradamshtra, in a transport of rage, began to speak, brandishing a huge mace stained with flesh and blood, and said :—

" What is that puny and miserable monkey, Hanuman, to us as long as the mighty Rama, Sugriva and Lakshmana exist? This very day, I shall return, having slain Rama, Sugriva and Lakshmana single-handed with the blows of my mace and routed that army of monkeys, or, if it pleaseth thee, hear this further plan of mine; he, who is resourceful, may easily overcome his adversaries.

" Thousands of titans, able to change their shape at will, courageous, invincible, of terrifying aspect, are devoted to thee. Let them, assuming human form, present themselves before Kakutstha, foremost of the Raghus, and, full of confidence, say to him :—

" 'We are here on behalf of Bharata, thy younger brother', whereupon Rama, summoning his forces will instantly come hither; then armed with lances, picks and maces, carrying bows, arrows and swords in our hands, we will set out with speed from here and meet him. Thereafter, stationed in battalions in the air, we will exterminate that army of monkeys under a hail of rocks and shafts and send them to the region of Yama. Should they fall into the trap, it will prove disastrous for them and Rama and Lakshmana will inevitably lose their lives."

[1] The abduction of Sita.

Then the son of Kumbhakarna, the valiant and powerful Nikumbha, in the height of anger, said in the presence of Ravana, the destroyer of the worlds :—

" Let all of you remain here with our great king ; by myself I shall slay Raghava, Lakshmana, Sugriva and also Hanuman and all the monkeys."

Thereafter in his turn, a titan named Vajrabanu, as tall as a mountain, who, in his wrath, was licking his lips, took up the tale, saying :—

" Free from all anxiety, occupy yourselves with those things which afford you entertainment, single-handed I shall consume the entire monkey host. Remain here at ease and drink wine[1]; alone I shall slay Sugriva, Lakshmana and also Hanuman, Angada and all the monkeys."

CHAPTER 9

Bibishana advises Ravana to send back Sita

THE Generals Rabhasa, the mighty Suryashatru, Saptaghna, Yajnakopa and Mahaparshwa, Mahodeva, the irrespressible Agniketu and the Titan Rashiketu, the lusty Indrashatu, son of Ravana, also Prahasta, Vimpaksha and the exceedingly powerful Vajradamshtra, Dhumraksha, Nikumbha and the Titan Durmukha, brandishing maces, harpoons, lances, darts, spears, axes, bows furnished with arrows and swords shining like a great expanse of water, all of whom were blazing with anger addressed Ravana saying :—

" To-day we shall slay Rama, Sugriva and Lakshmana as also that wretch Hanuman who laid Lanka waste ! "

Then Bibishana, restraining those who had seized hold of their weapons, persuaded them to be seated and spoke thus with joined palms :—

" My Dear Brother, the wise affirm that when the end which is sought cannot be attained by the three means[2], the conditions

[1] Varuni—See Glossary.
[2] Conciliation, gift and sowing dissension.

when force should be employed are determined by the tacticians. O Friend, deeds of valour which have been tested according to prescribed injunctions, succeed against those who are careless when attacked, or who are in opposition to the divine power. Now, Rama is on his guard, he is eager for victory, he is upheld by divine power, he has subdued his passions and is invincible, yet you seek to defeat him.

"When Hanuman crossed the ocean, that formidable Lord of Streams and Rivers, who could have conceived or even imagined the path he would take? Our adversary has immense resources and troops at his disposal O Rangers of the Night, you should in no way disregard him! What wrong has the illustrious Rama ever done to the King of the Titans that he should go to Janasthana and bear away the consort of that great One?

"If Khara, who had trespassed into a region that was not his own, was slain in combat by Rama, is it not legitimate for everyone to defend his life? It is on account of Vaidehi's abduction that we are in this great peril and we should therefore yield her up. What advantage is there in continuing the quarrel? Nay, it is not proper to enter into hostilities with that powerful and virtuous prince, who would never initiate warfare without a definite cause. Therefore do you give back Maithili to him ere he, by means of his arrows, destroys this city abounding in wealth of every kind with its horses and elephants! Before that formidable and mighty monkey host attack this, our Lanka, do you give back Sita. Lanka with all her heroic titans will perish unless the beloved consort of Rama is voluntarily returned to him.

"I adjure you by the blood that unites us to follow my counsel, which is salutory. Return Maithili to Rama ere he looses his shafts for your destruction, which are freshly sharpened, steely, infallible, plumed and bright as the autumnal sun. Give back Maithili to the son of Dasaratha without delay; renounce a resentment which destroys all felicity and virtue and pursue righteousness which increases well-being and glory. Be pacified, that we may live in tranquillity with our sons and kinsfolk. Give back Maithili to Dasaratha's son!"

Thus spoke Bibishana, and Ravana, the Lord of the Titans, dismissing them all, entered his private apartments.

CHAPTER 10

Bibishana insists that Sita should be given back to Rama

As the day dawned, Bibishana, renowned for his exploits, fixed in the knowledge of what was just and profitable, entered the palace of the King of the Titans which resembled a mass of crags like unto the peak of a mountain. That vast area was the resort of the great; well ordered and divided, it was inhabited by learned persons and guarded by loyal and vigilant titans on all sides. Re-echoing to the sound of the wind blended with the trumpeting of intoxicated elephants, the blare of conches and the blasts of trumpets, groups of lovely girls filled the alleys with their chattering. Its gates were of pure gold enriched by magnificent decorations resembling the abode of the Gandharvas or the mansions of the Maruts, and it contained heaps of gems like unto the Serpents[1] dwellings.

Then that One of exceeding energy and renown entered the palace of his elder brother, as the sun of sparkling rays enters a cloud, and he heard the blessings invoked on his brother for his victory uttered in a loud voice by those versed in the Veda. And he beheld those priests instructed in the science of 'Mantras' and the Veda, worshipped with vessels of curds, clarified butter, flowers and hulled rice. Thereafter the mighty-armed Bibishana, duly honoured by the titans, observed the younger brother of the Bestower of Riches[2], who was seated there.

Approaching the throne that was covered with gold, embellished by the person of the king, he paid homage, extending fitting courtesies to him and took the seat indicated by Ravana's glance. Thereafter he addressed the mighty Dashagriva in the presence of his ministers alone and, standing before him, with soothing speech sought to pacify him, manifesting his knowledge of time and place, and expressed himself thus :—

"O Subduer of thy Foes, ever since Vaidehi was brought here, inauspicious omens have been observed! The sacrificial fire emits sparks and its brightness is dimmed by smoke;

[1] Serpents, the Nagas or the Serpent Race.
[2] The Bestower of Riches, the God Kuvera, brother of Ravana.

impure vapours arise therefrom even after the oblations have been poured to the accompaniment of sacred formulas nor does it burn in a proper manner. In the kitchens, sacred pavilions and the halls, where the Vedas are recited, reptiles are to be found and ants are discovered in the sacrificial offerings. The milk of the kine has dried up, ichor no longer flows from the strongest of the elephants, horses find no satisfaction in their fodder and neigh incessantly, while the asses, buffalo and mules, their hair standing on end, shed tears, and, though ministered to by experts, do not behave normally, O King.

" Fierce crows gather together from all sides, emitting harsh cries and are seen swarming on the roofs of the temples. Vultures plane mournfully over the city and at dusk, jackals appear howling lugubriously. Wild beasts and deer assemble at the gates of the city, setting up an ominous noise to the accompaniment of growls. These omens indicate that thy fault should be expiated as the Lord thinks proper by returning Vaidehi to Raghava.

" If, through error or expediency, I have given cause for offence, thou shouldst not condemn me, O Great Monarch! All thy people, both male and female and thy court affirm that the fault is thine! It is through fear that thy ministers dare not counsel thee but I feel compelled to inform thee of what I have seen and heard. Judge what thou considerest to be right and act accordingly."

Thus spoke Bibishana in measured words to his brother, Ravana, Lord of the Titans, in the presence of the ministers, and, hearing that judicious, reasonable, moderate and logical speech, productive of great good for the past, present and future, Ravana, who had conceived a passion for Sita, answered with mounting anger, saying :—

" I see no cause for fear anywhere! Rama shall never regain Maithili! Even were Lakshmana's elder brother upheld by the Gods with Indra at their head, how could he withstand me in the field ? "

Having spoken thus, that destroyer of Celestial Hosts, Dashagriva, who was endowed with terrific strength and extreme prowess in combat, dismissed his brother Bibishana of frank speech.

CHAPTER II

Ravana summons his Assembly

THAT unrighteous monarch, a slave to his passion, disregarding his real friends, in consequence of his evil act began to suffer decrease.

His lustful desire exceeding all bounds, his thoughts constantly occupied with Vaidehi, though the occasion for war was lacking, with his ministers conceived that the time for entering into hostilities had come. Thereupon, sallying forth, he ascended his mighty chariot plated with gold, encrusted with coral and pearl and harnessed to well-trained horses. Seated in that excellent car, which reverberated like thunder, Dashagriva, the foremost of titans drove to the place of assembly.

Titans with swords, bucklers and every kind of weapon preceded their king on the highway, some garbed in strange attire covered with every kind of gem marched at his side or followed in his wake, and they surrounded him on all sides. The foremost of the car-warriors speedily precipitated themselves in his vanguard with their chariots or on great elephants intoxicated with Mada juice or horses which they caused to rear. Brandishing maces and crowbars, they held picks and darts in their hands.

As Ravana approached the assembly, the sound of innumerable musical instruments could be heard and the blare of trumpets broke forth to the accompaniment of the rolling of vehicles whilst the great chariot of that Indra of Demons passed along the splendidly decorated highway. The canopy, that was held over his head, shone with an immaculate purity, resembling the king of the stars at his full, and two fans of Yaks tails with crystal handles and golden fringes were waved to and fro from left to right. All the titans having alighted, stood with joined palms and bowed heads in homage to their king who was seated in his car.

Amidst acclamations and cries of triumph from those titans, that scourger of his foes made his solemn entry into the assembly hall that had been constructed by Vishvakarma.

The floor was of refined gold and six hundred evil spirits guarded it. Into that excellent audience hall, a masterpiece of Vishvakarma, Ravana made his entry sparkling with magnificence and seated himself on a gorgeous throne wrought of emeralds, carpeted with skins of deer and furnished with thick cushions.

Thereupon he issued his orders imperiously to exceedingly fleet messengers, saying :—

" Summon the titans hither with all speed ! " thereafter adding, " A great blow is about to be struck by the enemy ! "

Hearing this command, his envoys dispersed to search throughout Lanka, entering every house and scouring the highways and pleasure resorts, assembling the titans without ceremony. Some started out in excellent chariots, some on swift and mettlesome horses or elephants and some on foot. The city was thronged with cars, elephants and horses and resembled the sky filled with birds.

Then they abandoned their mounts and chariots of every kind in order to enter the audience chamber and they resembled lions penetrating into a rocky cavern.

Having, each in turn, paid homage to the feet of the king, they took up their positions, some on seats, some on cushions, some on the ground, and gathering in that hall at his command they grouped themselves according to rank round their sovereign, the Lord of the Titans.

They came in hundreds ; ministers distinguished for their skill in dealing with affairs and talented sagacious counsellors able to view all with the eye of understanding ; warriors also in great numbers gathered in the hall that sparkled with gold, in order to prepare for the success of their campaign.

At that moment, arriving in a magnificent chariot, its various parts encrusted with gold, Bibishana appeared in the assembly presided over by his elder brother and, announcing himself by name, he paid obeisance to the feet of the king, whereafter Shuka and Prahasta, in their turn, did homage to that monarch, who conferred special places upon them befitting their rank.

The titans were adorned with fine gold and every kind of ornament, arrayed in rich vestures, and the fragrance of aloes and rare sandalwood from their garlands perfumed the hall on every side.

Neither harsh accents nor ill-advised utterances nor loud whisperings could be heard in the assembly and, their desires crowned, all those titans of extreme prowess fixed their eyes on the face of their sovereign.

In the midst of those skilled warriors full of energy, the intelligent Ravana appeared resplendent in that assembly like unto the God with the Thunderbolt amongst the Vasus.

CHAPTER 12

The Discourse between Ravana and Kumbhakarna

THEN Ravana, the conqueror of hostile armies, let his gaze wander over the assembly and addressing himself to the General of his forces, Prahasta, said :—

" O General, it is for thee, who art conversant with the four branches of strategy, to dispose of thy forces in the way that the defence of the city demands."[1]

Thereupon Prahasta, alert to his sovereign's behests and eager to carry them out, distributed the whole of his troops within and without the fortress and, having disposed of his entire army in the city's defence, he returned to his seat in front of the king and said :—

" O Mighty Lord, I have stationed thy forces within and without the city, now accomplish that which thou hast resolved to do speedily and without anxiety ! "

At these words of Prahasta's, that monarch, who aspired to happiness and who was devoted to the public welfare, expressed himself thus amidst his followers :—

" Should duty, pleasure or self-interest endanger whatever is pleasant or unpleasant, whether it be in prosperity or adversity,

[1] According to whether they were in chariots, on elephants, horses or on foot.

gain or loss, whether useful or disadvantageous, you are bound to point it out. No undertaking of mine, that I have engaged in with you, re-inforced by the recitation of sacred formulas, has ever proved fruitless! As the Maruts, the moon, the stars and the planets follow in Vasava's wake, so do you all follow me in a splendid procession assuring me of victory!

"In truth I intended to mobilize you all but, on account of Kumbhakarna being asleep, I have not pressed this matter! After sleeping for six months, the foremost of those bearing arms, has just risen. As regards the beloved consort of Rama, the daughter of Janaka, I brought her here from the solitudes of the Dandaka Forest which is frequented by titans. That princess of languid pace does not wish to share my bed, though in the Three Worlds, I see none to compare with her. Slender-waisted, with well developed hips, her countenance resembling the autumnal moon, she is like an image made of gold created by Maya.[1] Her palms are rosy, her feet are delicate and well set, her nails coppery and, seeing her, I am overcome with desire. Shining like the flame of the sacrificial fire she rivals the brightness of the sun; her face with its arched nose is flawless and fair, her eyes beautiful. On beholding her I am no longer master of myself and become the slave of love. Torn between anger and delight, this passion has proved my undoing, the cause of ruin and the eternal source of pain and suffering. In anticipation of the advent of her lord, Rama, that lovely large-eyed lady has solicited a year's grace of me and I have looked with favour on the request of that one of tender glances but, like unto a spent steed on the highway, I am weary of the pricks of passion.

"How will those inhabitants of the woods cross the impassable ocean with the innumerable monsters that inhabit it and how can those two sons of Dasaratha traverse it? The outcome of this enterprise is impossible to predict. Say what you think in this matter! A mere man causes no apprehension; yet ponder on it carefully!

"Formerly, in the war between Gods and Titans, thanks to your support I was victorious and you are still ready to stand by me.

[1] Maya—The Artificer of the Gods.

"Having ascertained where Sita is, those two princes, preceded by the monkeys with Sugriva at their head, have reached the shores of the sea. It is not for us to return Sita but to destroy the two sons of Dasaratha, therefore deliberate on this and adopt a judicious line of conduct. In truth, I know of none in the world who can overcome us, even should he cross the water with the monkeys; victory is therefore indubitably mine."

Hearing the ramblings of that bashful lover, Kumbhakarna flew into a transport of rage and said:—

"On first seeing Sita, the consort of Rama, who is accompanied by Lakshmana, she who was brought here by force, thy mind was wholly possessed by her as the waters of the lake are filled by the Yamuna. O Great King, this conduct is not worthy of thee! Thou shouldst have consulted us at the outset of this affair. The king who acquits himself of his obligations punctiliously, O Ten-faced One, and whose mind is concentrated on what he is about, has not to repent later! Those undertakings that are carried out carelessly and against the scriptural law turn out badly, like unto impure offerings poured into the sacrificial fire by those who are heedless. To seek to end where one should begin or to begin where one should conclude is to ignore what is proper and what is not. If an adversary examines the defects of one who is unrestrained, he soon discovers his weak points, as birds the fissures in the Krauncha Mountains. Thou didst make this assault without forethought and it is fortunate that Rama did not slay thee, as poisoned food the eater thereof! Nevertheless I shall do my part in this campaign that thou dost contemplate launching against thine enemies, O Irreproachable One! I shall destroy thine adversaries, O Ranger of the Night, even as Indra, Vivasvat, Pavaka, Maruta, Kuvera or Varuna themselves, I shall fight against them!

"Entering the combat with my enormous body, the size of a mountain and my sharp teeth, roaring the while and brandishing my immense mace, I shall strike terror into Purandara himself!

"Ere the foe can deliver a second blow, I shall drink his blood, therefore take comfort, for by slaying Dasaratha's son I shall bring thee an auspicious victory! Having destroyed Rama as also Lakshmana, I shall devour all the monkey leaders! Enjoy

thyself therefore and drink the most excellent of wines to the extent of thy desire without anxiety; do what thou judgest to be best!

"When I have despatched Rama to the region of death, Sita will be at thy disposal for ever."

CHAPTER 13

Ravana tells the Story of the Nymph Punjikasthala

SEEING Ravana wrought up with ire, the mighty General Mahaparshwa reflected a moment and, with joined palms, spoke thus:—

"He who, having penetrated into a wood frequented by wild beasts and serpents, does not partake of the honey he finds there, is a fool!

"Who is thy master? Thou art the master, O Scourge of Thy Foes! Enjoy thyself with Vaidehi, having placed thy foot on the head of thy foe! Act in the manner of a cock, O Valiant Prince! Approach Sita again and again in order to enjoy her and pass the time in dalliance with her. Having sated thy passion, what is there to fear? Whether taken unawares or no, thou art well able to meet every exigency! Without support Kumbhakarna and Indrajita of immense energy, would be capable of challenging the God who bears the Thunderbolt armed with his mace!

"Bestowal of gifts, conciliation and sowing dissension in the ranks of the enemy are the means of subduing them, according to the wise, but in the present circumstances, I incline to the use of the fourth! O Lord, we shall subdue thy foes by the strength of our arms, do not doubt it!"

Thus spoke Mahaparshwa and the king, thanking him, replied thus:—

"O Mahaparshwa, I will answer thee by recounting a strange adventure that befell me a long time ago.

"While she was going to worship the Grandsire of the World, I came upon the nymph, Punjikasthala, flashing through the sky

like a flame. I stripped her of her attire in order to deflower her, after which like a faded lotus she reached the abode of Swyambhu. The magnanimous Ordainer of the World, learning of the matter, addressed me in anger, saying :—

"'O Ravana, from to-day, if thou dost violence to any other woman, thy head will be split into a hundred pieces, this is certain !'

"This curse alarmed me and it is for this reason that I have not forced Sita, the Princess of Videha, to ascend the nuptual couch. My fury is like unto the sea and my speed resembles the wind but the son of Dasaratha is unaware of it and it is on this account he has set out to fight me. Who would seek to waken a lion lying asleep in a hidden mountain den whose anger resembles the God of Death himself?

"Ramachandra has not seen my arrows in combat that resemble snakes with forked tongues, wherefore he is considering marching against me. From my bow, loosing my shafts that are like unto lightning on him from a myriad sides, I shall speedily consume Rama, as a forest is set on fire by flaming brands. I shall wipe out his army with mine, as the rising sun blots out the light of the stars. Neither Vasava of a thousand eyes nor Varuna can withstand me in battle ! It was by the strength of mine arms that I conquered the city defended by Kuvera !"

CHAPTER 14

Bibishana blames the Attitude of Ravana's Courtiers

PRINCE BIBISHANA listened to the boasting of Ravana and the thundering of Kumbhakarna and addressed the king in words that were profitable and sagacious, saying :—

"O King, why hast thou brought that great serpent in the form of Sita hither, her breasts its coils, her anxieties its poison, her laughter its sharp fangs, her five fingers its five hoods? While Lanka is yet not assailed by those monkeys, armed with their teeth and nails, who are as high as hills, give back Maithili to the son of Dasaratha !

"Neither Kumbhakarna nor Indrajita, O King, neither Mahaparshwa nor Mahodara neither Nikumbha nor Kumbha nor yet Atikaya are able to withstand Rama on the field of battle! Thou wouldst never escape from Rama alive even wert thou protected by Savitar or the Maruts or if thou didst take refuge in the region of Yama or plunge into the lowest hell!"

Thus spoke Bibishana and Prahasta answered him saying :—

"We do not know what it is to fear the Gods or titans whoever they may be, nor do we stand in awe of Yakshas, Gandharvas nor great Serpents, gigantic birds nor great snakes in the field. Why then should we tremble to enter into combat with Rama, that son of a mortal king?"

Hearing this injudicious speech of Prahasta's, Bibishana, who sought to save the king and whose intellect was rooted in the values of virtue, profit and expediency, uttered these words full of good sense, saying :—

"O Prahasta, the intrigues proposed by the King, Mahodara, thee and Kumbhakarna against me, born with qualities such as Rama possesses are as unlikely to succeed as the entry into heaven of one of perverse soul. It is impossible for me or thee or Prahasta or all the titans to slay Rama, who is supremely experienced. It is as if we sought to cross the sea without a boat! In the presence of such a hero, essentially pious, that Prince of the Great Car, the issue of the Ikshvaku Race who is capable of any exploit, even the Gods themselves are confounded! It is because those sharp arrows, irresistible and furnished with heron's plumes, that are loosed by Raghava, have not as yet pierced thy limbs, that thou art still able to boast, O Prahasta! It is because those pointed shafts that Rama discharges, which quench the vital breaths and are equal to the lightning in their velocity, have not penetrated thy body, that thou dost still bluster in this wise! Neither Ravana nor the exceedingly powerful Trishiras nor the son of Kumbhakarna, Nikumbha nor Indrajita, nor even thou thyself, are able to overcome the son of Dasaratha in combat, who is equal to Indra himself. Neither Devantaka nor Narantaka, neither Akampana, the magnanimous Atiratha nor Atikaya are capable of resisting Raghava in battle.

"You, the friends of this monarch who is dominated by passion,

violent by nature and whose acts are thoughtless, flatter him, as though you were his foes, to the destruction of the titans! Rescue and deliver that king who is held fast in the illimitable coils of a serpent possessed of a thousand hoods and who is formidable and of exceeding energy. It is for the sovereign's friends, whose desires have been gratified by him, to save him, even were it by dragging him by the hair of his head, like one who has fallen a prey to fiends of immeasurable power. It is for you unitedly to rescue that monarch from the surging waters of the ocean Rama, he who is sinking into the mouth of the Kakutstha hell!

"I will here repeat those words that are to the advantage of the city, the titans, the king and the host of courtiers! I repeat them loyally and candidly 'Let Maithili be given back to that Prince!'

"He who, having estimated the strength of his foes, his own resources, the situation and the loss and gain of his undertaking and, after mature reflection, expresses himself frankly and judiciously to his master, is a true counsellor."

CHAPTER 15

Bibishana reproaches Indrajita for his boasting

THIS speech of Bibishana's, who was equal to Brihaspati in wisdom, displeased the great Indrajita, Leader of the Nairrita Hosts, who replied to him thus:—

"What do these idle words fraught with fear signify, O Youngest of my Uncles? None other, even were he the issue of another race than our own, would speak thus or even conceive such thoughts! Valour, courage, endurance, steadfastness, audacity and strength are lacking in Bibishana alone, the youngest brother of my sire.

"Who are, in fact, these two sons of a king of men? One of us single-handed, were he the least of the titans, would suffice to exterminate them both! O Coward, from whence springs thy fear? Was I not able to cast the Protector of the Three

Worlds to the ground, the Lord of the Devas himself? Struck with terror, the Hosts of the Gods scattered in all directions and the loudly trumpeting Airavata was brought down by me, whose tusks I rooted out, dispersing the celestial armies by my valour. I who humbled the pride of the Gods themselves and afflicted the Daityas, am I in mine immeasurable energy not able to subdue these two princes, insignificant mortals as they are?"

At this speech of that invincible and powerful rival of Indra, Bibishana the foremost of warriors answered him in words fraught with good sense, saying:—

"My Child, thy reflections are worthless! Thou art young and thine intellect is not yet ripe; further, to our ruin, thou art incapable of ascertaining what is expedient and inexpedient.

"Under the guise of a son, O Indrajita, thou art in truth a hidden foe to Ravana and, hearing him prate of slaying Raghava, thou dost support him. Thou dost merit death, as also he who had the grievous idea of bringing thee here this day and introducing a youthful, rash and arrogant warrior into an assembly of counsellors! O Indrajita, thou art thoughtless, imprudent, feeble of intellect, thy mind ruined by folly and extreme frivolity and thou speakest thus from childishness. Who can withstand the shock of those shining arrows which Raghava looses in combat resembling the Rod of Brahma, like unto fate or the Sceptre of Yama? Do thou give back Sita to Rama with treasure, pearls, rich ornaments, celestial attire and gems, so that we may dwell here without anxiety, O King."

Chapter 16

Ravana rebukes Bibishana who takes his Departure

Bibishana, having uttered these words that were reasoned and full of good sense, Ravana replied in harsh accents, saying:—

"It were better to live as a declared enemy or with a venomous serpent than to dwell with one who, under the guise of a friend, is in league with the foe. The disposition of relatives who ever rejoice in others' misfortunes is well known, O Titan. Kinsfolk

ever seek to bring down the one who is endowed with authority, energy, learning and loyalty and, should he be a hero, he is the more condemned by them. Constantly finding delight in the discomfiture of one another, their bows ready to strike each other down, their hearts full of deceit, they are both formidable and dangerous.

"Those verses formerly recited by the elephants in the Padma Forest, on seeing men with snares in their hands, are well known; I will repeat them to thee:—'Neither fire nor weapons nor traps strike terror into us but those of our own kind who are cruel and self-interested, it is they whom we fear! They alone, undoubtedly divulge the means of making us captive!'

"Of all perils, those that spring from relatives are the worst, this is known to us. From cows we have milk, from relatives malice, from women capriciousness, from brahmins asceticism. That I am held in honour by my subjects and have been called to rule over an empire by descent and have set my foot on the heads of mine enemies, will certainly not have found favour with thee! As drops of water are unable to remain on the lotus leaves, so does friendship slip from the hold of worthless persons. As in autumn the thunderclouds, which empty themselves, fail to saturate the earth, so does friendship fail with the vicious. As bees fly away after they have sucked out the honey they have found, so do the unworthy relinquish a friendship after it has served their purpose. As the honey stealer in its greed, feeding on the Kusha Flowers, does not exhaust their nectar neither do the wicked savour friendship to the full.

"If any other had addressed such a speech to me, O Ranger of the Night, he would have ceased to breathe at that very instant! As for thee, a curse upon thee, O Obloquy of thy Race!"

At this affront, Bibishana, who ever spoke what was true, rose up mace in hand with four other titans and, filled with indignation, that fortunate one, standing in space, said to his brother, the King of the Titans:—

"Thou hast lost thy reason, O King, but say what thou wilt, an elder brother is the equal of a father and must be reverenced even if he leave the path of equity; nevertheless I am unable to tolerate these outrageous utterances of thine! Words of wisdom

that are dictated by a desire for the welfare of others, O Ten-necked One, are not acceptable to those who are not masters of themselves and have fallen under the sway of death! Those who make flattering speeches are easy to find but rare are they who utter salutory though unpleasing words or those who will listen to them! I could not brook seeing thee caught in the noose of death, who bears away all beings, neither did I desire to see thee pierced by the sharp and golden arrows of Rama resembling flaming torches. Even stout-hearted persons full of skill and courage fall in combat and are carried away like walls of sand if death overcomes them. Thou shouldst accept this counsel on account of its import for thine own good! By every means defend thyself as well as this city and the titans! In thine own interest I sought to restrain thee but my words have not found favour with thee, O Ranger of the Night. Fare-thee-well, I go; thou wilt be happier without me! At the point of death, those whose life has run its course do not listen to the advice of their friends!"

CHAPTER 17

Words of the leading Monkeys regarding Bibishana

HAVING spoken thus severely to Ravana, Bibishana went away and almost immediately reached the place where Rama and Lakshmana were.

Resembling the peak of Mount Meru, like a flash of lightning in the sky, he was seen by the leaders of the monkeys who were stationed on the ground.

Accompanied by four titans of renowned courage, furnished with armour and arrows, adorned with marvellous jewels, he resembled a mass of cloud, the equal of the God who wields the Thunderbolt and that hero was bearing excellent weapons and was covered with celestial gems.

Beholding him with his four companions, Sugriva, the sagacious King of the Monkeys, who was invincible, standing amidst his forces became thoughtful and, after reflecting a

moment, addressed the monkeys with Hanuman and others anxiously, saying :—

"Without doubt, this titan, armed with weapons and accompanied by four of his kind, is coming to slay us!"

Hearing these words of Sugriva, all the leading monkeys brandishing great trees and rocks, said to him :—

"Do thou speedily order us to slay these evil doers, O King! Let us strike these weaklings down so that they fall on the earth!"

As they were speaking thus, Bibishana, who was master of himself, had reached the northern shore and halting there, that highly intelligent and powerful titan, who was fully self-subdued, on perceiving Sugriva and the monkeys, said aloud to them :—

"Ravana is the name of a wicked titan and their lord, and I am his younger brother, my name is Bibishana. It is Ravana who, having killed Jatayu, carried off Sita from Janasthana. That unfortunate one is held captive against her will amidst the female titans who guard her jealously. I have tried to persuade them by diverse arguments, continually repeated, to return Sita to Rama but Ravana impelled by fate will not listen to my sage advice. Reviled by him and treated like a slave, I, abandoning my consort and my son, have come to take refuge with Rama. Do thou inform the high-souled Raghava, that magnanimous protector of the worlds, that I, Bibishana, have come hither."

At these words, the swift-footed Sugriva, full of indignation, ran to find Rama and, in the presence of Lakshmana, said to him :—

"Having belonged to Ravana's forces, here is an adversary taking us unawares, who without warning has come hither to slay us at the first opportunity, like an owl destroying crows! Thou knowest all concerning the plans, organization, distribution of troops and the secret service of the monkeys, as also of thy foes, O Thou who art their scourge! May good betide Thee! These titans, who are able to change their forms at will, conceal their designs; they are bold and inventive in strategy, assuredly one may not trust them!

"This must be an emissary of the Lord of the Titans who, undoubtedly has come to sow dissension amongst us or to discover our weak points; having first gained our confidence by

craft, he himself intends to attack us one day. Assistance that is provided by a friend or an inhabitant of the woods like ourselves or by a compatriot or a servant, may be accepted but one should eschew that offered by a foe, O Lord! This deserter who has come to us is a titan by nature and the brother of thine adversary, how can we trust him on first sight? He is Bibishana, the younger brother of Ravana and he has come with four titans to ask for thy protection. Nay, it is Ravana who has sent this Bibishana; it is essential that thou satisfy thyself regarding him, O Thou, the most circumspect of persons! This titan of deceitful soul has come hither for the purpose of treacherously striking thee down when thou dost least expect it, O Irreproachable Hero! Let him and his confederates die in extreme torture, this brother of the wicked Ravana!"

Having given vent to his fury in the presence of the eloquent Rama, the King of the Monkeys, a skilled orator, became silent!

Hearing Sugriva's words, the mighty Rama said to the monkeys headed by Hanuman who stood near:—

"You have heard for yourselves what your Sovereign has expressed in judicious words of deep significance regarding the younger brother of Ravana; in times of crisis one should always receive the counsel of one who desires the welfare of his friends, and who is intelligent and prudent."

Thus addressed by Rama, all those monkeys, ardently desiring his success, hastened to express their opinion, saying:—

"Nothing is unknown to thee in the Three Worlds, O Raghava; it is in deference to us that thou dost consult us as friends! Thou art loyal, brave, pious, established in heroism and dost act only after thou hast considered the matter in accord with tradition with full confidence in thy friends. Let all the intelligent and experienced ministers debate this matter thoroughly, each in his turn."

Thus spoke those monkeys and first the sagacious Angada suggested to Raghava that he should enquire into Bibishana's intentions, saying:—

"One should sound a deserter who presents himself in every way. It would not befit us to put full trust in Bibishana at once. It is in concealing their real nature that these perfidious beings act, and further they attack unexpectedly, which would prove

fatal to us. Examine him to discover what is right or wrong before taking any decision and, if it prove to our advantage, form an alliance with him; if to our disadvantage, reject it. If it be fraught with danger, then renounce it, but if it should bring us real benefit, let us give him a fitting welcome!"

Thereafter Sharabha, having reflected awhile, gave his opinion, revealing his motives, saying:—

"Without delay, O Lion among Men, send out a spy and, having by means of a wary agent, undertaken a thorough investigation, deal with him in a suitable manner."

Then Jambavan, inspired by his knowledge of the scriptures and his own experience, expressed himself in irreproachable and lucid terms saying:—

"Bibishana has come to us from a declared enemy, the wicked Lord of the Titans, and he has arrived here without any regard for time and place; let us be on our guard against him!"

In his turn, Mainda, skilled in the matter of truth and error, a fluent speaker, uttered these prudent words:—

"Bibishana is the younger brother of Ravana, let us interrogate him gently and progressively, O King of Kings! When thou hast informed thyself of his feelings, then act according to whether his intentions are honest or no, O Prince of Men!"

Thereafter, Hanuman, the foremost of beings versed in the scriptures, spoke in sweet accents in words fraught with integrity, saying:—

"Even Bibishana himself cannot excel thee who art of an exalted intellect and the foremost of those skilled in speech. It is not from a desire to speak nor out of emulation nor a sense of superiority nor from a love of debate that I open my mouth, O my Lord Rama, but on account of the importance of the matter in hand. That which thy counsellors have said seems to me erroneous and the real question does not lie there. If one does not interrogate this titan, it is impossible to discover why he has come hither but to make use of him has its disadvantages also. Concerning the sending out of a spy to make investigations as thy minister advises, I regard it as unwise nor will it succeed. It has been said that Bibishana had no regard for time and place when he came hither, I reserve my judgment here; it appears to me that the time and place are appropriate, his fault or merit

consists in leaving one for another. Knowing the wickedness of Ravana and thy true value, Bibishana has, by his arrival, shown his tact and intelligence. Further it was said, O Prince, 'Let emissaries in disguise question him' and this speech suggested several thoughts to me. He who is suddenly interrogated, if he be wise, becomes cautious and refuses to speak; the most amiable of those, who come as friends, will change after such an useless enquiry. It is not possible, O King, to discover the character of a stranger immediately but only after frequent conversations when words may escape him that will betray any perfidy. The speech of this titan does not indicate an evil nature and further he has an open countenance and I have no doubts concerning him. He is in no way embarrassed and is master of himself, he does not appear to be a knave. His language is not that of a perverse being and I do not feel any suspicion regarding him. Inevitably people's real nature is only gradually revealed. When an undertaking is suited to the time and place, O Most experienced of Men, and it is a practical proposition, it will meet with speedy success. Bibishana is aware of thy magnanimity and also of Ravana's baseness. He has heard of the slaying of Bali and the crowning of Sugriva and what is more he has a desire to rule the kingdom! If this is what has determined him to come hither and these are apparently his motives, then this is what his alliance is worth to us. I have said what I had to say to prove the upright character of this titan; thou hast listened to me and the rest depends on thee, O Prince of the Wise."

CHAPTER 18

Rama listens to the Advice of the Monkeys about receiving Bibishana

HEARING the words of the Wind-god's son, the invincible Rama, versed in the scriptures, answered him and, expressing his own conclusions, said :—

"I also have reflected on Bibishana and wish to make the result known to thee, O Thou who art established in virtue! I shall

never refuse to receive one who presents himself as a friend, even were I mistaken no honest man could reproach me for it."

At these words, Sugriva, that lion among monkeys, reflecting carefully, replied in more reasonable words and in eloquent terms addressed Rama, saying :—

"What matters it if this ranger of the night be well or ill-intentioned, if in time of peril he abandons his brother, whom will he not betray subsequently?"

At these words of the King of the Monkeys, Kakutstha looked round on that company and, smiling gently, said to Lakshmana, distinguished for his saintly characteristics :—

"He who has not studied the scriptures nor possessed reverence for authority could not utter such words as have been expressed by the Lord of Monkeys! There is however something peculiar in these circumstances, it seems to me, which is particularly to be seen in monarchs. Kings have two avowed enemies, their kinsmen and their neighbours, who turn against them in times of adversity; this is what brings this titan here!

"Relatives who are not of a perverse nature, honour those of their own family who have treated them well but in the case of kings even a virtuous relative is suspect! As to the fault that you point out which consists in accepting the assistance of a foe, I will tell you what the scriptures say on this, hear me!

"We are not related to the titans and it is not our kingdom that he covets. It is certain his compatriots are informed about Bibishana's departure and for this reason we should receive him. They will have assembled with joy and without anxiety and thereafter the cry 'This one or that is afraid', will have created a division amongst them; this is what has brought about Bibishana's arrival here.

"All brothers, O Dear One, do not resemble Bharata nor all sons what I was to my sire nor do all friends resemble each other."

Thus spoke Rama, and Sugriva rising, as also Lakshmana, bowed low and thereafter that exceedingly sagacious monkey said :—

"Know that it is Ravana who has sent out this ranger of the night! I regard it as imperative that we should make an end

of him, O Thou, the most circumspect of persons! This demon under the order of a perverse creature has come hither to make an assault on thee, myself and Lakshmana, when we are unprepared for it, O Irreproachable Warrior. He merits death, this Bibishana, brother of that inhuman Ravana, as well as his accomplices."

Having spoken thus to the eloquent prince of the House of Raghu, Sugriva, the leader of the army, a fluent speaker became silent and Rama, having listened to Sugriva, that lion among monkeys, reflected awhile and then addressed that foremost of monkeys in measured terms, saying:—

"Whether this titan be ill-intentioned or no, what does it matter, he cannot do me the least mischief. On earth, Pisachas, Danavas and Yakshas, as also the titans can be slain by me with the tip of my finger, if I so desire it, O King of the Monkeys.

"It is related how a pigeon with whom his adversary had taken refuge entertained him and invited him to partake of his own flesh, even though he was the ravisher of his mate. Such was the hospitality offered by a pigeon; what should therefore a man like myself not do? Hearken to these verses, pre-eminently sacred, sung aforetimes by the son of Kanva, that great ascetic of truthful speech, Kandu:—

"'A miscreant who approaches with joined palms, seeking refuge, should not in the name of humanity be slain even if he be a foe, O Parantapa! The unfortunate or the fearful who plead for shelter or throw themselves on the mercy of their enemy, should be protected by him who is master of himself. If, conforming to the tradition, one does not render assistance according to one's capacity, either for reasons of fear, delusion or anger, one is reproached by all and the suppliant, who perishes before the eyes of the one of whom he has sought help in vain, carries away all his merit!'

"Therefore it is a heinous crime not to give shelter to those who petition it on this earth; it is to deprive oneself of heaven and glory and to lose one's strength and prowess! Consequently I shall follow the excellent counsel of Kandu, which is pious, honourable and leads to heaven as the fruit of merit. Any being who has sought refuge with me, saying—'I am thine' is assured of my protection, I swear it! Bring this stranger

to me, O Monkey, I shall offer him security whether he be Bibishana or Ravana himself! "

Thus did Rama speak and Sugriva, the King of the Monkeys, answered that son of Kakutstha, whom he held in deep affection, thus :—

" What wonder is it that thou who art loyal, virtuous and established in righteousness, thou who shinest like a jewel in the head of kings, shouldst speak thus ? I, also, in my heart, am convinced of Bibishana's integrity. Deduction, feeling, everything has been used to probe this matter thoroughly ; let him be admitted immediately amongst us on equal terms, O Raghava ! Let Bibishana, who is full of wisdom, join our alliance ! "

At these words of Sugriva, the King of the Monkeys, Rama immediately joined Bibishana as Purandara the King of the Birds.

CHAPTER 19

Bibishana is brought before Rama

RAGHAVA having accorded him protection, the younger brother of Ravana, the highly intelligent Bibishana bowed to him, looking down on the earth.

Thereafter he descended joyously from the sky to the ground with his faithful companions and that virtuous one ran towards Rama and, falling at his feet with the four titans, addressed him in words full of loyalty and discretion, fitting the occasion :—

" I am Ravana's younger brother and I have been greatly affronted by him. I have therefore come to seek refuge with thee, the protector of all beings ! Abandoning Lanka, friends and possessions, I place my kingdom, life and happiness at thy disposal ! "

At these words, Rama, in soothing tones, while seeming to consume him with his gaze, said :—

" O Bibishana, tell me truly what is the strength and weakness of the titans ? "

Thus questioned by Rama of imperishable exploits, that titan described the might and extent of Ravana's power, saying :—

" By virtue of a special boon conferred on him by Swyambhu, Dashagriva is invulnerable to all beings, Gandharvas, Serpents and Birds, O Prince. I have also another brother older than myself, the valiant Kumbhakarna, the illustrious rival of Indra in war.

" O Rama, Ravana has Prahasta commanding his forces, who is perhaps known to thee. It is he who vanquished Manibhadra in combat on Mount Kailasha ! When clad in armour that no arrow can pierce, furnished with his archer's gloves, Indrajita, taking up his bow, makes himself invisible, and on the battlefield, having propitiated the God of Fire, that fortunate one sows carnage amongst the foe, O Raghava. Mahodara, Mahaparshwa and the Titan Akampana, who are his lieutenants, resemble the Lokapalas on the field of battle.

"Ten thousand kotis of titans, able to change their form at will, feeding on flesh and blood, inhabit Lanka. At their head, their sovereign the wicked Ravana made war on the supporters of the earth as also the Gods who were all overcome by him."

Having listened to Bibishana and weighed his words carefully, Rama expressed himself thus :—

" These exploits of Ravana's that thou hast faithfully described are well known to me ; I shall slay Dashagriva as also Prahasta and his sons ; thereafter I shall install thee as king ; believe me, this is the truth ! Were he to plunge into the region of Rasatala or even Patala or take refuge with the Grandsire of the World, he would not escape alive ! Before I have annihilated Ravana with his sons, his kinsfolk and his allies in battle, I shall not return to Ayodhya, I swear it by my three brothers ! "

Thus did Rama of imperishable exploits speak and the venerable Bibishana bowing unto him, said :—

" In the slaying of the titans and the capture of Lanka, I will assist thee with all my strength ; I will break through the enemy's ranks."

As he spoke thus, Rama embraced him and thereafter he commanded Lakshmana saying :—" Do thou bring water from the sea and anoint the sagacious Bibishana as King of the Titans under my direction, O Noble Brother ! "

Thereupon Saumitri, in accord with Rama's behest, performed the royal anointing in the midst of the leading monkeys and immediately those monkeys, beholding Bibishana raised to that supreme rank, acclaimed that magnanimous titan, crying: " Excellent ! Excellent ! ".

Meanwhile Hanuman and Sugriva enquired of Bibishana, saying :—

" How shall we, with the mighty army of monkeys who surround us, cross the ocean, that indestructible empire of Varuna ? What means should we employ to traverse the refuge of the Lord of Streams and Rivers speedily with our troops ? "

At this question, the virtuous Bibishana answered :—" That Prince, the offspring of the Race of Raghu, should approach the ocean that was excavated by Sagara[1] and he will assuredly help one of his own race ".

Thus spoke Bibishana, that sagacious titan, and Sugriva instantly went away with Lakshmana to join Rama.

Thereafter the thick-necked Sugriva conveyed to him this salutory counsel of Bibishana's to take refuge with Sagara and it found favour with the virtuously minded Rama. Then that illustrious prince replied to Sugriva, the King of the Monkeys, who was accompanied by Lakshmana. Full of respect for that monkey, who sought to gratify him in every way, he smiled upon him as also on his brother Lakshmana and said :—

" This plan of Bibishana's pleases me, O Sugriva and Lakshmana. Sugriva is sagacious and was ever a prudent counsellor : do ye both reflect on the matter and say what you consider to be best."

Having spoken thus to them, those two warriors Sugriva and Lakshmana answered in respectful tones, saying :—

" How should the counsel of Bibishana not find favour with us in these circumstances ? He brings us the means to success. Without throwing a bridge over the sea, that redoubtable dominion of Lanka will remain inaccessible even to the Gods and titans with their leaders. Let us carry out the suggestion of the virtuous Bibishana scrupulously ; enough time has been lost. Let us approach Sagara, so that with our army we may reach Lanka of which Ravana is the support."

[1] Sagara being one of Rama's ancestors. His story is told in Balakanda.

At these words, Rama proceeded to the shore that was covered with Kusha Grass belonging to the Lord of Streams and Rivers as the God of Fire ascends the altar.

CHAPTER 20

Ravana sends Shuka to Sugriva

Now the titan, Shardula by name, who had gone out to reconnoitre, beheld the army encamped under Sugriva's command, and that spy belonging to the wicked Ravana, King of the Titans, having inspected those troops, returned and, regaining Lanka with all speed, said to his sovereign :—

" Behold a multitude of monkeys and bears, immeasurable and boundless as the sea, approaching Lanka. The sons of Dasaratha, the brothers Rama and Lakshmana, who are illustrious and endowed with beauty, have come to search for Sita. Having reached the shores of the sea, they have encamped there, O Illustrious Prince. These forces cover ten leagues in extent in every direction ! O Great King, it behoves thee to inform thyself of the true state of affairs immediately ! Let thine emissaries enquire into the matter speedily ; restitution, conciliation or sowing dissension are involved here."[1]

Hearing Shardula's words, Ravana, the Lord of the Titans became perturbed and, reflecting on the matter, instantly gave orders to Shuka, the most skilled of negotiators, saying :—

" Go and seek out Sugriva on my behalf and say to that prince in persuasive and ingratiating tones :—

"Assuredly thou, the offspring of a race of great monarchs, the mighty son of the King of the Bears, art exceedingly powerful ! Thou hast nothing to fear ; thou art to me as a brother, O Lord of the Monkeys. If I bore away the consort of that crafty prince, what is it to thee ? Do thou return to Kishkindha ; Lanka cannot be conquered by these monkeys by any means nor by the united efforts of the Gods with the Gandharvas, how much less by men or apes ?' "

[1] The Three means of dealing with an enemy.

At this command of the King of the Titans, that Night-ranger Shuka, rising into the air, rapidly passed through space and, having journeyed for some time high over the waters, halted and, standing in the sky, repeated all he had been told by the wicked Ravana to say to Sugriva. As he was still speaking, the monkeys bounded into the air and, smiting him with their fists, prepared to tear him to pieces and fling him to the ground.

Thus maltreated by the monkeys, Shuka spoke in this wise :—

" One does not assault an ambassador, O Kakutstha, therefore send away these monkeys. He who withholds the message of his master and gives voice to that which he has not been authorized to utter, merits death."

Hearing Shuka's complaints, Rama issued a command to those monkeys, who were assaulting that titan, saying:—" Do not slay him! " and Shuka having received immunity from the attacks of the monkeys, steadying himself in the air with his wings, spoke again, saying :—

" O Sugriva, Thou who art endowed with magnanimity, O Hero, who art full of energy and valour, what shall I say to thee on the part of Ravana, the Scourge of the World ? "

Being thus addressed, that mighty King of the Monkeys, the foremost of all the apes, interrupted that Ranger of the Night, Shuka, and made the following proud reply, characteristic of his nature :—

" Thou art not my friend nor art thou worthy of my pity, thou art neither my benefactor nor dost thou find favour with me ! Thou and thy kinsfolk are the enemies of Rama, thou shalt perish like Bali and thou meritest death ! I shall annihilate thee, thy sons, thy relatives as also Lanka to which I shall lay siege at the head of my great army and reduce it to ashes !

" Nay, thou insensate Ravana, thou shalt never escape Raghava even if thou wert protected by the Gods themselves with their leaders. Wert thou to make thyself invisible in the sun's path or enter into hell or take refuge at the lotus feet of the King of the Mountains,[1] thou with thy followers wilt succumb to Rama's blows. In the Three Worlds, I see none whether be it Pisacha, Rakshasa, Gandharva, or Asura, who is able to

[1] Mt. Kailasha.

protect thee! Thou hast slain the aged King of the Vultures and carried off the large-eyed Sita in the presence of Rama and Lakshmana and, having made her captive, dost not recognize her for what she is! Thou art unaware how strong, powerful and irresistible to the Gods themselves is this Prince of the Race of Raghu, who shall deprive thee of thy life."

Thereafter the foremost of monkeys, the son of Bali, Angada, took up the discourse and said :—

"O Virtuous King, this is no ambassador, he has the appearance of a spy; he is only here to count our forces, let him be arrested, do not allow him to return to Lanka. Such is my opinion."

Thereupon at a sign from the king, the monkeys flung themselves on that titan, whom they seized and bound, whilst he, without defence, wailed loudly.

Ill-treated by those furious monkeys, Shuka began to cry upon the magnanimous Rama, born of Dasaratha, saying :—

"They are tearing out my wings ruthlessly and putting out my eyes, may the consequences of all the evil deeds that I have done since the day I was born till the night I die, fall on thee if I lose my life!"

Hearing his cries, Rama would not sanction his death and ordered the monkeys to release him.

CHAPTER 21

Rama looses his Arrows on Sagara

THEREAFTER, spreading the Darbha Grass on the shore of the sea, Rama with joined palms, his face turned towards the east, made obeisance in honour of the ocean and laid himself down.

That Scourge of his Foes pillowed his head on his arms that resembled the coils of a serpent and were adorned with ornaments of gold, their habitual decoration; those arms that formerly were perfumed with sandal and aloes, saffron of the hue of the dawn lending them lustre; those arms on which Sita leant on the nuptual couch causing them to shine as do the waters of the

Ganges the body of Takshaka ; those arms, resembling the shafts of a chariot, that increased the distress of his foes and the delight of his friends, were stretched out on the shore of the sea.

The tightening of the bow-string had rubbed the skin off the left arm of that skilful archer and the right, that bestower of thousands of kine in charity, resembled a great mace. Leaning on his powerful elbow, the mighty-armed Rama said :—

" Sagara will grant me a passage or he shall be slain by me ! "

Having thus resolved, he lay down by the ocean, restraining his speech and with a concentrated mind in accord with tradition. There, following the scriptural injunction, Rama lay on the ground spread with Kusha Grass and slept peacefully for three nights. For three nights Rama, endowed with learning and piety, remained beside Sagara, the Lord of the Waters. Nevertheless that indolent one did not appear to that hero, who had yet paid him honour as was his due. Thereupon, his eyes suffused with wrath, Raghava, enraged against him, said to Lakshmana, the bearer of auspicious marks, who stood near :—

" It is from contempt that the Ocean does not appear to me in person ! Deference and forbearance, integrity and friendly speech, these qualities belonging to virtuous men are not valued by those who are deprived of them, who regard them as weakness, whereas the braggart, the dissolute and the arrogant who boast openly and commit every kind of excess, are overwhelmed with regard ! Meekness will never bring victory on this earth, O Lakshmana, any more than in the forefront of battle ! To-day, pierced by my shafts, thou shalt behold aquatic monsters by their leaping churn up the waters where they dwell on every side ! See, O Lakshmana, how I shall sever the serpents' coils and the limbs of the great fish like unto the trunks of elephants. To-day I shall dry up the ocean with its multitudinous waves, shells, pearls, fish and monsters. Because I have manifested patience, the Ocean, the abode of whales, regards me as powerless ! Away with forbearance to such persons ! It is on account of my mildness that he manifests his true nature ! Bring me my bow, O Saumitri and mine arrows resembling venomous snakes, I shall dry up the sea and the monkeys may then cross it on foot ! To-day, indomitable though he be, I shall yet overthrow Sagara with my shafts ; he who is bounded

by the shore and who is filled with a myriad waves ! I shall wipe out that Ocean, the Abode of Varuna, that is inhabited by great giants."

Speaking thus, bow in hand, his eyes dilated with anger, Rama appeared exceedingly terrible, like unto the Fire at the end of the world cycle. Grasping his formidable bow with its barbed and fearful shafts more firmly, he caused the earth to tremble as does Shatakratu with his thunderbolts. His flaming and impetuous arrows, unrivalled in power, penetrated the waters of the sea and struck terror in the serpents. And those waves of the sea with their sharks and monsters, were extremely agitated, so that with the roaring of the wind, a formidable clamour arose. In a trice, the ocean became a mass of clashing waves, throwing up spray, shells and fragments of mother of pearl, and panic spread among the Pannagas of flaming jaws and brassy eyes and amidst the mighty Danavas in their abode, the depths of hell. Waves in their millions as high as the Vindhya and Mandara Mountains rose from that Lord of Waters with his crocodiles and great fish and the Ocean emitted a loud roaring, amidst the breaking billows, with the terrified serpents, demons and great crocodiles in flight.

Then Saumitri rushed towards Rama, who, in his burning ardour, was stretching his incomparable bow with loud mutterings, crying:—" Stay ! Stay !" and thus speaking, he took hold of that weapon, saying :—

" Thou hast no need to act in this wise to accomplish thine end and bring Sagara to subjection, O Foremost of Heroes ! Thy peers do not permit themselves to be overcome by anger ! Call to mind the forbearance of virtuous men ! "

At that instant, the Brahmarishis and celestial Rishis, who, invisible, were stationed in the sky, cried out :—" Hold ! Hold ! do not act thus ! "

CHAPTER 22

The Army crosses the Sea

THEREAFTER the Prince of the Raghus addressed the Ocean in menacing tones, saying :—

"To-day I shall dry up the sea with the nether regions! O Sagara, with thy waters consumed by my shafts, thy denizens slain by my blows, a great cloud of dust will arise from thy drained bed and the monkeys will cross to the other shore on foot!

"Thou hast sought to oppose me but art unaware of my valour or my strength! O Abode of the Danavas, being full of pride, thou canst not foresee thy fate!"

Thereafter, fixing an arrow resembling the Rod of Brahma and placing it on his excellent bow, Raghava stretched that weapon, and heaven and earth seemed to be riven, as it were, and the mountains trembled, darkness covered the earth and all the regions were obscured. Tremors ran through the lakes and rivers; the sun, moon and stars swerved in their course and though the sky was lit by the sun's rays, it was enveloped in darkness and blazed with a hundred meteors, whilst thunder reverberated with an unparalleled sound in the firmament. The five celestial Maruts blew and like massed legions tore up the trees, dispersing the clouds in the twinkling of an eye, breaking off the points of the rocks and shattering the mountain peaks. In the sky, loud thunder claps resounded with immense power and tumult. The invisible beings emitted cries of fear and, lying prostrate on the earth in their agony, shook with terror, convulsed and unable to move. Thereafter the Ocean with its mass of water, serpents and demons surged beyond its confines to the extent of a league, though the time of the final deluge was not yet at hand; nevertheless Rama, the descendant of Raghu, scourge of his foes, did not retreat before the disordered heavings of that Lord of Rivers and Streams!

Sagara himself rose out of the waves, like the day's orb rising

over the eastern mountain, Meru, and that Ocean appeared with the Pannagas of flaming jaws and he was of the hue of emerald, adorned with gold ; wreaths of pearls festooned his attire and on his head he bore a diadem of every kind of flower ; ornaments of refined gold and pearls from his domain were his decoration. Covered with gems and metals of every kind, resembling the Himavat Mountain, the waters surging round him, he was encircled by the clouds and winds, while the rivers Gunga and Sindhu were his escorts.

Rising, the noble Sagara, escorted by the rivers with the Gunga and Indus at their head, approached Rama with joined palms, who stood arrows in hand, and, reflecting awhile the Ocean said:—

" Earth, wind, air, water and light, O Beloved Raghava, remain fixed in their own nature. Neither from desire nor ambition nor fear, O Prince, nor from affection am I able to solidify my waters inhabited by sharks ; nevertheless I will make it possible for thee to cross over them ! This is my resolve— the sharks will remain inactive while the army makes its way across and, for the monkeys, I shall become like the earth ! "

On this, Rama said to him :—"Hear me, O Thou who art the refuge of Varuna ! This arrow of mine must accomplish its intended end ! Where shall I let this mighty shaft fall ? "

Hearing Rama's words and seeing that formidable missile, the exceedingly powerful Ocean replied :—

" To the north of this place is a sacred region, Drumakulya, a name as renowned in the world as thine own ! There innumerable robbers of fearful aspect and deeds, having Abhiras as their chief, drink my waters. The vicinity of those perverse beings is intolerable to me ; it is there, O Rama, that thou shouldst loose thy shaft that never misses its target."

Thus spoke the magnanimous Sagara and Rama, in accord with his wish, let fly that marvellous dart in his presence. And the place, where that arrow resembling a flash of lightning fell, is known in the world as the desert of Maru[1]. The earth pierced by that dart emitted a loud cry and from its gaping wound the waters of hell gushed forth. As the arrow fell, it created a thunderous sound and the deep crater which is known as Vrana[2]

[1] Maru—Malwar in Ragasthan.
[2] Vrana—The Wound.

was filled with the water of the deeper springs; it seemed as if the earth was riven and wells and ponds appeared there. This place became known as Marukantara and is famous in the Three Worlds. Thereafter Rama, the son of Dasaratha, having dried up the waters of the ocean, conferred a boon, saying :—

" This place shall be rich in pasturage and free from disease; it will abound in fruit, roots, honey, ghee and milk and be fragrant with aromatic herbs; thus it will remain retaining those excellent qualities ! "

In this way the Desert of Maru came to possess these manifold features and by the grace of Rama's liberality, assumed a pleasant aspect. When the waters had been dried up, Samudra, the Lord of Streams and Rivers, said to Raghava, who was skilled in the use of weapons :—

" My Friend, there stands Nala, the son of Vishvakarma, whose father has overwhelmed him with gifts; he is generous and devoted; great are the powers of that monkey; let him construct a bridge over my waters, I will uphold it; Nala is as skilled as his sire ! "

At these words the Ocean disappeared and Nala, that prince of monkeys spoke to the valiant Rama thus :—

" Resorting to the skill I have inherited from my sire, I shall build a bridge over the spacious and vast domain of aquatic monsters; what the Ocean has said is true !

" When one has to do with the ungrateful, in my opinion the rod is the most salutory method for men ! A plague on forbearance as also on generosity and kindness ! Assuredly Sagara, that formidable mass of water, in fear of punishment, wished to see a bridge constructed and out of fear was willing to suffer Raghava to pass over it.

" My mother received a boon on the Mandara Mountain from Vishvakarma, who said to her :—' A son will be born to thee who will resemble me, O Goddess ! '

" No one having questioned me, I have not spoken of my powers but I can assuredly construct a causeway over Varuna's domain; from to-day let all the leading monkeys set to work ! "

At Rama's command, those lions among the monkeys entered the mighty forest with alacrity in hundreds and thousands on every side and those leaders of the simian tribes, tearing up the

rocks, which in size they resembled, and the trees also dragged them to the sea and they covered the ocean with Sala, Ashvakarna, Dhava, Vamsha, Kutaja, Arjuna, Tala, Tilaka, Tinisha, Balalaka, Saptaparna and Karnikarna Trees in full flower, as also Cutas and Ashokas. Those foremost of monkeys transported those trees, with or without roots, bearing them like so many standards of Indra and they heaped Talas and piles of Dadina, Narikela, Bibhitaka, Kanya, Bakula and Nimba Trees here and there. With the aid of mechanical devices, those powerful colossi dug up stones as big as elephants and rocks, and the water suddenly spouted into the air only to fall instantly. Thereafter those monkeys churned up the sea by rushing into it on all sides or pulling on the chains.

That immense causeway constructed by Nala in the bosom of the sea was built by the arms of those monkeys of formidable exploits and it extended over a hundred leagues.

Some brought trunks of trees and others set them up; it was by hundreds and thousands that those monkeys, like unto giants, made use of reeds, logs and blossoming trees to construct that bridge, rushing hither and thither with blocks of stone resembling mountains or the peaks of crags, which, flung into the sea, fell with a resounding crash.

The first day those monkeys resembling elephants, of immense energy, full of high spirits and exceedingly merry, erected fourteen leagues of masonry. The second day, those highly active monkeys of formidable stature set up twenty leagues. Bestirring themselves, those giants threw twenty-one leagues of structure over the ocean on the third day and on the fourth, working feverishly, they built up twenty-two leagues in extent. The fifth day, those monkeys, industrious workers, reached to twenty-three leagues distance from the further shore.

That fortunate and valiant son of Vishvakarma, leader of monkeys, constructed a causeway worthy of his sire over the ocean and that bridge erected by Nala over the sea, the haunt of whales, dazzling in its perfection and splendour, was like the constellation of Svati in space.

Then the Gods, Gandharvas, Siddhas and supreme Rishis assembling, stood in the sky, eager to see that masterpiece and the Gods and Gandharvas gazed on that causeway, so difficult

of construction that was ten leagues in width and a hundred in length built by Nala.

Those monkeys thereafter dived, swam and shouted at the sight of that unimaginable marvel that was almost inconceivable and caused one to tremble ! And all beings beheld that causeway thrown over the ocean and by hundreds and thousands of kotis, those monkeys, full of valour, having built that bridge over the immense repository of waters, reached the opposite shore.

Vast, well-constructed, magnificent with its wonderful paved floor, solidly cemented, that great causeway like unto a line traced on the waves, resembled the parting of a woman's hair.

Meanwhile Bibishana, mace in hand, held himself ready at his post with his companions in case of an enemy attack. Thereafter Sugriva addressed Rama, who was valiant by nature, saying :—

" Mount on the shoulders of Hanuman and Lakshmana on those of Angada. O Hero, vast is this ocean, the abode of whales ; those two monkeys who freely range the sky will transport you both ! "

Then the fortunate Rama and Lakshmana advanced thus and that magnanimous archer was accompanied by Sugriva. Some monkeys strode forward in the centre, some threw themselves into the waves, some sprang into the sky, others marched on the bridge, some ranged through space like birds, and the terrific tumult of the tramping of that formidable army of monkeys, drowned the roar of the ocean.

When those simian troops had passed over the sea by the grace of Nala's causeway, the king ordered them to camp on the shore which abounded in roots, fruits and water.

At the sight of that masterpiece that had materialized under the command of Raghava, despite the difficulties, the Gods, who had drawn near with the Siddhas and Charanas as also the great Rishis, anointed Rama in secret there, with water from the sea and said :—

" Mayest thou be victorious over thy foes, O Thou, who art a God amongst men ! Do thou rule over the earth and the sea eternally ! "

Thus in various auspicious words did they acclaim Rama in the midst of the homage offered to him by the brahmins.

CHAPTER 23

Rama sees diverse Portents

THE elder brother of Lakshmana beheld certain portents and as their significance was known to him, he embraced Saumitri and said :—

"O Lakshmana, occupying this region provided with fresh water, and woods abounding in fruit, let us speedily divide these innumerable forces and form ourselves into battalions ! Great is the danger I foresee, boding destruction to the world and the slaughter of the valiant bears, monkeys and titans.

"A dust storm is blowing up, the earth trembles and the peaks of the mountains shake; trees fall, clouds resembling wild beasts emit a terrible roaring and let loose dreadful showers mingled with blood; there is an awe-inspiring twilight, lurid like unto red sandalwood; from the blazing sun, a circle of fire falls; filled with terror, wild beasts and birds with harsh voices are raising mournful cries to the sun on every side. In the night, the moon, bereft of brilliance, burning with a black and red halo as it rises, resembles the destruction threatening the world. A dark stain appears on the solar disc which is diminished, sombre, without radiance and coppery. Behold, O Lakshmana, a thick dust blots out the stars and seems to foreshadow the end of the world ! Crows, eagles and vultures fall wheeling, whilst jackals inspiring the greatest terror emit sinister howls. Rocks, maces and spears, hurled by the monkeys and demons, cover the earth which has become a morass of flesh and blood.

"Without delay, attended by all the monkeys, let us, this very day, attack this city difficult of access of which Ravana is the support !"

Thus spoke the Archer Rama, the subduer of the foe in conflict, and, bearing his bow and arrows, he set forth in the direction of Lanka.

Thereupon all the valiant monkeys with Bibishana and Sugriva at their head rose up crying destruction on their powerful foe and the boisterous demonstration of those heroic monkeys, made with the object of pleasing Rama, filled that son of the House of Raghu with delight.

CHAPTER 24

Shuka describes his Reception by tne Monkeys to Ravana

THAT army of warriors in well-ordered formations looked splendid with the radiance Rama conferred on it which resembled the full moon on a starry night, and the earth, pressed under foot by the energetic tread of that multitude like unto the sea, trembled with fear.

Meanwhile those inhabitants of the woods heard a great tumult arising in Lanka and the formidable rolling of drums and clashing of gongs caused their hair to stand on end. This clamour filled the leaders of the monkeys with joy and, in their ardour, they emitted shouts that surpassed that uproar, and the cheering of the Plavamgamas, resembling the rumble of thunder in the skies, reached the ears of the titans.

Seeing Lanka dressed with many coloured banners, the son of Dasaratha bethought himself of Sita and his heart was filled with grief. He reflected—'It is there that that youthful woman, whose eyes resemble a gazelle's, is held captive by Ravana, like Rohini when she is overpowered by the red-bodied planet'[1].

Heaving long and burning sighs, that hero looked at Lakshmana and spoke words fitting to the occasion to him :—

" See, O Lakshmana, this marvellous city, built by Vishvakarma on the summit of the mountain, set aloft so that it appears to lick the skies, where innumerable palaces cluster like unto the aerial abode of Vishnu covered with white clouds ; Lanka with its blossoming groves looks magnificent like Chaitaratha which is filled with the song of birds of every kind and glowing with fruit and flowers ! See how a gentle breeze

[1] Mars.

sways the branches from which the birds dart, where bees swarm and where cuckoos abound."

Thus did Rama, the son of Dasaratha address Lakshmana and thereafter ranging his forces according to the traditional methods, he issued the following commands to that army of monkeys.

" Let the valiant and invincible Angada place his troops in the centre with the General Nila. Surrounded by the simian battalions, Rishabha should establish himself on the right wing of the army, and he who resembles an elephant in mustha, the indomitable and courageous Gandhamadana, should place himself at the head of the left flank. I shall go to the forefront of the army with Lakshmana as mine aide-de-camp and Jambavan, Sushena and Vegadarshin to spy out the land.

" Those three high-souled ones, the leaders of the bears, should protect the centre of the forces and the rearguard be under the command of the Lord of Monkeys, as the western region is dominated by the sun of brilliant rays."

The innumerable divisions being thus skilfully distributed, that army, led by the foremost of monkeys armed with boulders and huge trees, resembled the heavens with its mass of clouds ; and those monkeys advanced on Lanka that they were eager to destroy.

" It is with the peaks of mountains that we shall demolish Lanka or if need be with our bare fists ! " such was the resolve of those powerful monkeys.

At that instant the exceedingly valiant Rama said to Sugriva :—

" Our forces are properly marshalled, now let Shuka be released ! "

Under the order of that Indra of Monkeys, who was full of energy, Ravana's agent was set at liberty. Released on Rama's command and harassed by the monkeys, Shuka, in a frenzy of terror went to seek out the King of the Titans, whereupon Ravana with a sneer enquired of him :—

" What is the meaning of thy fettered wings ? Why are thy flanks torn ? Hast thou fallen into the power of those capricious monkeys ? "

Thereupon Shuka, wrought up with fear, pressed by his exceedingly powerful sovereign, made this reply :—

" Repairing to the northern shore of the sea in order to deliver thy message faithfully by employing gentle and soothing tones, those barbarous Plavamgamas, barely having caught sight of me, hurled themselves upon me and began to beat and pound me with their fists. It was quite impossible to enter into any form of mediation with them or discuss anything; those monkeys are ferocious and violent by nature, O Lord of the Titans! The slayer of Viradha, Kabandha and Khara, Rama, however, who is accompanied by Sugriva, is searching for Sita. Having thrown a bridge over the sea and traversed the salty waves, that archer, Raghava, has come hither and sets the titans at nought.

"The bears and monkeys, gathering in thousands of divisions equal to mountains or clouds, cover the earth. There is no more possibility of an alliance between the monkeys and the titans than between a God and a demon! Before they reach the ramparts decide quickly how thou wilt act; either restore Sita to Rama or enter into conflict with him!"

Thus spoke Shuka and Ravana, his eyes red with anger, looked at him as if he would consume him with his glance and said:—

" Even had I to enter into conflict with the Devas, Gandharvas and Danavas, I would not restore Sita, were the whole earth to shake! When will my shafts fall on Raghava as the intoxicated bees fall on the blossoming trees in Spring? When, with mine arrows, shall I consume his body flowing with blood as flaming torches destroy an elephant.

" His forces will suffer eclipse before my powerful army as the brilliance of the stars at the rising of the sun. That son of Dasaratha is not aware that I possess the strength of Sagara and the swiftness of Maruta, that is why he desires to meet me in combat. Rama has not yet seen the shafts resembling venomous serpents that repose in my quiver; that is why he wishes to enter into combat with me! That Raghava is not yet conversant with my great might nor with the Vina in the form of my bow that I pluck with mine arrows, the bow-string producing a formidable sound, the cries of the wounded its terrible accompaniment, the darts its innumerable notes and which, when I enter the river of the enemy ranks as into a vast arena, I shall cause to resound on the field of battle!

"Neither the thousand-eyed Vasava in person nor Yama of the fiery missiles nor Vaishravana himself is able to overcome me in battle !"

CHAPTER 25

Ravana sends out Shuka and Sarana to spy on the Monkeys

RAMA, the son of Dasaratha, having traversed the ocean with his army, the boastful Ravana addressed his counsellors Shuka and Sarana, saying :—

" The entire army of monkeys has crossed the impassable ocean on a bridge constructed by Rama, an unprecedented exploit ! I never deemed it possible to throw a causeway over the sea !

" Introduce yourselves into their ranks without being discovered and inform me exactly regarding the number and prowess of those monkey leaders, the counsellors who customarily attend on Sugriva and Rama and the scouts and warriors among them ; further how the dyke was constructed over the waters of the sea ; how the army advances, of their plans and of the strength and weapons used by Rama and the courageous Lakshmana."

At this command, the two Titans, Shuka and Sarana, assuming the form of monkeys, boldly entered into the simian ranks but they were unable to count the monkey host which was endowed with unimaginable energy causing the hair to stand on end and which amidst the caves and waterfalls spread over the summits of the mountains. From every side those divisions came, some having crossed, some crossing and some still to cross, and those who were arriving or had still to come, emitted loud roars and, to those rangers of the night, resembled the infinite sea.

Now the illustrious Bibishana recognized Shuka and Sarana under their disguise and arresting them denounced them to Rama, saying :—

" Here are two followers of the King of the Titans who have come to spy out conditions, O Conqueror of Hostile Citadels ! "

Terrified at the sight of Rama and despairing of their lives, the two demons, with joined palms, said to him in great fear :—

" O Most Cherished Issue of the House of Raghu, we have been sent by Ravana to find out about the whole army ! "

Hearing these words, Rama, the son of Dasaratha, who delighted in the welfare of all beings, smiling, answered them, saying :—

" If you have inspected the whole army and examined their positions carefully and fulfilled the mission entrusted to you, then return in peace. But if there is anything you have not investigated and you still wish to see, then Bibishana will show it to you fully. Your arrest should not cause you any apprehension with regards your lives, you are envoys and, having laid aside your arms, have been taken captive ; you do not merit death !

" O Bibishana, set these two rangers of the night free, who have come in disguise to spy on us with the intention of creating division amongst their foes. And you, when you return to the great City of Lanka, repeat my words faithfully to the King of the Titans, saying :—

" 'That force on which thou didst rely when taking Sita away from me, employ freely with the aid of thy troops and allies. To-morrow at break of day, thou shalt see mine arrows demolish the City of Lanka with its ramparts and arches as well as the army of titans ! My dreadful ire will fall on thee and thy forces at dawn, O Ravana, as the God bearing the Thunderbolt, Vasava, discharges it on the Danavas ! ' "

Receiving this command, the two Titans, Shuka and Sarana, admiring his justice, cried out :—" Mayest thou be victorious ! " and paid obeisance to Rama.

Returning to Lanka, they said to the Lord of the Titans :—

" Bibishana took us captive with the intention of slaying us, O King, but Rama, he whose valour is immeasurable, seeing us, let us go !

" In that place four of the foremost monkey leaders are assembled who are equal to the Protector of the Worlds. Their warriors, skilled in the use of weapons, of proved prowess, are Rama the son of Dasaratha, the fortunate Lakshmana, Bibishana

and the highly energetic Sugriva, whose strength is equal to the great Indra's.

"Even without the monkeys themselves taking part, they are able to penetrate into this City of Lanka with its walls and arches and tear up the foundations and transplant them elsewhere. Such is Rama's capacity and such his weapons that he could overthrow the city single-handed, his three companions standing by! Under Rama, Lakshmana and Sugriva's protection that army is completely invincible even against the Gods and Asuras combined! Now that army of powerful and aggressive monkeys, dwellers in the woods, is breathing war; it is useless to dispute with them. Make peace and restore Maithili to the son of Dasaratha!"

CHAPTER 26

Sarana tells Ravana of the principal Leaders of the Monkeys

HEARING the sincere and courageous utterance of Sarana, the King Ravana, answered:—

"Even did the Gods, Gandharvas and Danavas unitedly seek to attack me and were all beings to tremble, I would not restore Sita; O Friend, having been roughly handled by the monkeys thou dost fear them and for this deemest it opportune for me to give up Sita! What adversary is able to overcome me in war?"

Having uttered this arrogant speech, Ravana, the Lord of the Titans, in order to survey the horizon, proudly went up to his palace that was as white as snow and as high as innumerable palm trees. Accompanied by his ministers, Ravana, who was transported with anger, swept the mountains, forests and ocean with his glance and he beheld the entire region covered with Plavamgamas.

Seeing that illimitable and invincible army of monkeys, Ravana enquired of Sarana, saying:—

"Who are the leaders of these monkeys? Who are their warriors? Who their princes? Who are those marching at their head in order to demonstrate their valour? Who are

Sugriva's counsellors and his generals? Tell me all, O Sarana! What is the strength of these monkeys?"

Sarana, thus interrogated by that Sovereign of the Titans being well-informed, pointed out the leaders of those dwellers in the woods to him.

He said: "That monkey who stands before Lanka roaring amidst a hundred thousand leaders who escort him, whose powerful voice shatters the whole city with its walls, gates and arches, its rocks, forests and jungles and who is in command of the army of the magnanimous Sugriva, Lord of all the Deer of the Trees, is the valiant General Nila.

"He who holds his arms high and who tramples the earth under his feet as he marches, that hero whose face is turned towards Lanka and who, in fury, yawns convulsively, who resembles the peak of a mountain in stature and the filaments of a lotus in hue, who, in an excess of anger, continuously lashes out with his tail, the swish of which is heard in the ten regions, that warrior whom Sugiiva, the King of the Monkeys, installed as heir-apparent, is named Angada and he is challenging thee to combat. That warrior, the equal of his sire, Bali, is beloved of Sugriva and as devoted to Raghava's interests as Varuna is to Shakra's. That Janaka's daughter has been seen by Hanuman, who is as swift as the wind and the servant of Raghava, is all due to the advice of Angada. Having formed innumerable battalions with the foremost of monkeys, that warrior is marching against thee at the head of his army in order to destroy thee.

"Close to Bali's son and himself surrounded by a considerable number of troops, the valiant Nala, the builder of the bridge, stands ready on the battlefield.

"Those soldiers clad in saffron colour, who are stretching their limbs, roaring and gnashing their teeth, are following the one who boasts that he will overthrow Lanka with his forces: it is Shveta of silver hue, who is exceedingly agile and brave; that intelligent monkey, a warrior renowned in the Three Worlds has come to take his orders from Sugriva and will leave at once to place the army of monkeys in strategic positions and inspire enthusiasm amongst his divisions.

"That one who formerly ranged the Mountain Ramya, that is also called Samrocana on the borders of the Gaumati River and

which is covered with trees of varying fragrance, ruled over a kingdom there, is the General Kumuda and that other, who joyfully draws in his train hundreds and thousands of warriors with long hair and immense tails hanging down, who are coppery-coloured, yellow, black, white and matted, hideous to look upon, is the intrepid Monkey Kanda. He yearns to fight and boasts that he will destroy Lanka with his forces.

"The third, who resembles a tawny lion with a great mane and whose gaze is fixed attentively on the city as if he wished to consume it with his glances, who dwells mostly on the Mountains Krishna and Sahya of the Vindhya Range of pleasing aspect, is the General Rambha, O King. Three hundred kotis of the most valiant of monkeys who are formidable, impetuous, burning with ardour surround him and follow in his steps for the purpose of causing the destruction of Lanka by their blows.

"The one who is shaking his ears and yawning continuously, who, when facing death remains immoveable and who never retreats in the face of a hostile army but eyeing them askance foams with rage; he who lashes out with his tail and gnashes his teeth, that hero of immense energy, wholly devoid of fear, O King, has his abode on the ravishing Mountain of the Salveyas and the name of that leader is Sharabha; to him belong forty hundred thousand monkeys named Viharas[1].

"The one who is like unto a great cloud enveloping space and who, surrounded by monkey warriors, resembles Vasava amidst the Gods, whose voice like the roll of a drum, can be heard from the midst of the monkeys, who is eager to fight, dwells in Pariyatra, a mountain that is exceeded by none in height; that general ever invincible in combat is named Panasa. That commander with fifty lakhs of lieutenants, each of whom leads his own battalion, who shines resplendent amidst the host of monkeys of terrifying bounds, who are encamped on the seashore like unto a second ocean, he who resembles Dardura[2] is called General Vinata. In his wanderings he drinks the waters of the Vena, that most excellent of rivers. His army is composed of sixty thousand Plavamgamas and that monkey, named Krathana,

[1] Viharas—'Those who roam about at will'.
[2] Dardura—A mountain in the south, sometimes associated with Mount Malaya.

challenges thee to combat. His lieutenants are full of daring and vigour and each commands a battalion. That monkey whose body is well nourished and who is of the colour of red ochre, who, in the pride of his strength ever holds the other monkeys in contempt, is the illustrious Gavaya. He is advancing towards thee full of fury and seventy hundred thousand warriors accompany him ; he also boasts that he will lay Lanka waste with his troops.

"Those invincible heroes may not be numbered and the flower of their captains are each at the head of his own particular force."

CHAPTER 27

Sarana continues his Deposition

"I shall describe these valiant leaders that thou art able to see, who are devoted to Raghava, full of prowess and who count their lives as nought. That one, the hairs adhering to whose enormous tail are coppery, yellow, black, white and hideously matted and that stand on end, a tail that brilliant as the sun's rays brushes the earth as he advances, is the Monkey Hara. He is followed by hundreds and thousands of monkeys brandishing trees, awaiting the moment to attack Lanka ; they are the leaders of the Monkey King and in the service of the Simian government.

"Those warriors, whom thou perceivest in such incalculable numbers, that are no more able to be counted than the sands on the limitless shores of the sea and who cover the mountains, plains and rivers, ranged like sombre clouds, black as collyrium, extremely ferocious and valiant fighters, are the bears ; observe how they are advancing to confront thee, O King. In their midst, surrounded on every side by them, like Parjanya by storm clouds, is their sovereign of dreadful glance and fearful aspect ; he inhabits Rikshavat, a very high mountain and goes to slake his thirst at the Narmada River ; he is the lord of all the bears and his name is Dhumra ! He has a brother,

younger than he, who resembles him in stature but who far surpasses him in valour; behold him, Jambavan, like unto a mountain! Of controlled senses, he is full of reverence for his spiritual superiors and implacable in combat. His intelligence greatly assisted Shakra in the war between the Gods and the titans and he was the recipient of many boons. These giants hurl down great rocks as large as clouds from the mountain heights, which they have scaled, nor do they tremble in the face of death. Shaggy, resembling Rakshasas or Pisachas, those warriors of surpassing energy roam about in great numbers. And that commander on whom the eyes of the monkeys are fixed, who now leaps up in fury and then stands motionless, that foremost of monkeys, O King, dwells on the Sahasraksha Mountain, and the name of that exceedingly valiant leader is Rambha.

"He who, walking on all fours touches the mountain a league away with his flanks, whose chest is a league in height, who is not surpassed by any quadruped in beauty is the renowned Samnadana, the Grandsire of the Monkeys. Extremely skilful, he formerly entered into combat with Shakra on the battlefield, who was unable to defeat him, such is that superior leader.

"Another whose valour equals Indra's on the battlefield was born of a youthful Gandharva maiden and Krishnavartman. In the struggle between the Devas and Asuras he brought help to the Celestials. That illustrious one sits beneath the Jambhu tree on that mountain, the King of Peaks,[1] frequented by Kinneras, which constantly affords delight to thy brother, O Lord of the Titans. It is near there that that fortunate one, that powerful Lord of the Monkeys, General Krathana, whose prowess is not confined to words and who ever eschews defeat, sports. He is standing surrounded by thousands of monkeys; he also undertakes to crush Lanka!

"The one who usually roams by the Ganges, sowing terror among the elephants, remembering, as he does, the old quarrel between elephants and monkeys, that leader with a voice of thunder, who dwells in the mountain caves, subduing the tuskers in the woods and uprooting the trees, that Prince of Monkeys, like unto Indra himself, passes his life happily at the head of a

[1] Kailasha.

host of monkeys by the river that issues from the Himalayas or Ushirabija, otherwise Mandara, the highest of mountains. Hundreds and thousands and millions of monkeys, proud of their strength and agility, full of prowess and fire, roaring loudly, follow that indomitable warrior, their leader, named Pramathin. It is he, resembling a great cloud propelled by the wind, whom thou hast pointed out, surrounded by a furious band of intrepid monkeys who stir up a cloud of yellow-coloured dust which the wind carries in all directions. Those formidable and powerful black-snouted Golangulas, numbering a hundred times a hundred thousand, who, having assisted in the construction of the causeway, have gathered growling round the General of the Golangulas, named Gavaksha, threaten to demolish Lanka themselves. There where, frequented by bees, the trees yield fruit in every season, on that mountain encircled by the sun, the brightness of which it equals, the radiance of which shed on beast and bird, lends them the same brilliance, whose plateaus are never forsaken by the magnanimous and great Rishis, whose trees are laden with fruit possessed of every desirable savour, where exceedingly rare honey abounds; on that golden and ravishing mountain, the General Kesharin lives amidst those delights, O King.

"There are sixty thousand wonderful golden mountains in the midst of which Savarnimeru stands out, as thou amongst the titans, O King! It is on that mountain, that brown, white and copper-coloured monkeys or those yellow as honey dwell, who possess pointed teeth and nails and who resemble lions; they are as indomitable as tigers, the equals of Vaishvanara, with their long coiled tails like unto serpents vomiting poison or like elephants intoxicated with ichor as high as great hills, and they roar like thunder; their eyes are grey and round and when they are on the march they create an appalling uproar; all of them stand looking on Lanka as if they were about to destroy it. In their midst is the powerful leader who ever faces the sun; he is eager to conquer thee; his name is renowned in the world, it is Shatabali, O King, and he swears to destroy Lanka with his troops. Courageous, powerful, full of daring, he prides himself on his personal valour. In his devotion to Rama that monkey will not spare his life.

"Gaja, Gavaksha, Gavaya, Nala, Nila, all those monkeys are surrounded by ten kotis of fighters each, as also other leading monkeys impossible to count, so great is their number, agile inhabitants of the Vindhya Range. All, O Great King, are exceedingly powerful, their stature is equal to high hills and all are capable of levelling the earth by uprooting and razing its mountains to the ground."

CHAPTER 28

Shuka in his turn enumerates the Enemy

SARANA having described the forces of the enemy to Ravana, the Lord of the Titans, Shuka, in his turn, took up the tale, saying :—

"Dost thou observe those resembling elephants intoxicated with ichor, rising up like banian trees on the banks of the Ganges or Sala Trees on the Himalayas?

"O King, those warriors, able to change their form at will, are irresistible, equal to the Daityas and Danavas and, in war, are endowed with the valour of the Gods. They number twenty-one million or more; they are Sugriva's companions and Kishkindha is their accustomed abode; those monkeys born of the Gods and Gandharvas are capable of assuming different shapes at will.

"The two who stand there, who resemble each other and have the appearance of Gods, are Mainda and Dvivida, none is their equal in combat. Sanctioned by Brahma, they have drunk the water of immortality and they boast that they will demolish Lanka by their own prowess.

"As for that monkey whom thou seest there, resembling an intoxicated elephant, who in strength and fury is able to churn up the ocean itself, it is he who came to Lanka to find Vaidehi and spy on thee, O Lord. That monkey whom thou perceivest, has returned, he is the eldest son of Kesarin and his sire is said to be Vayu; he is Hanuman, who crossed the ocean. Able to change his shape at will, that handsome and courageous warrior is no more able to be stayed in his course than Satataga[1] himself.

[1] Satataga—The God of the Wind.

"While yet a child, seeing the sun rise, he desired to eat it and, springing up, followed it to a distance of three thousand leagues, reflecting :—' I shall seize hold of Aditya and my hunger will be appeased forever ! ' In this thought, intoxicated with his own strength, he leapt into the air but was unable to reach that God, who is invincible even to the Celestials, Rishis and Demons, and he fell on the mountain where that radiant orb rises. In his fall he fractured his jaw slightly on a rock and on account of the strength of his jaw he was called Hanuman !

" By associating with those monkeys I was enabled to learn his history, yet I am quite unable to describe his prowess, beauty and vigour adequately. He plumes himself on being able to destroy Lanka single-handed ; it was he who formerly set fire to the city ; how is it that thou dost not remember him ?

" Nearby is a warrior, dark of hue with eyes like lotuses, the Atiratha[1] among the Ikshvakus ; his heroism is well known in the world ; his sense of duty never wavers nor does he ever swerve from righteousness ; he knows how to loose Brahma's weapon and is conversant with the Veda ; indeed he is the most learned of Vedic scholars ; he shatters the firmament with his arrows and rends the earth ; his ire is equal to Mrityu's and he resembles Indra in valour ; his consort is Sita, whom thou didst bear away from Janasthana ; he is Rama, who has come to wage war on thee, O King.

" He who stands on his right, radiant as gold refined in the crucible, with a broad chest, reddened eyes and dark curly locks, is Lakshmana, who is devoted to his brother's interests and fortune ; a general and a seasoned soldier, he knows better than any how to handle every weapon. Full of ardour, invincible, victorious, brave, accustomed to success and powerful, he has ever been Rama's right hand and his very life's breath. Where it concerns Raghava he would never be the one to seek to preserve his life. He has also sworn to exterminate all the titans in battle.

" He who stands on Rama's left and who is surrounded by a group of titans, is Bibishana, whom that king of kings has installed as sovereign of Lanka ; he, filled with ire, is advancing in order to enter into conflict with thee !

[1] Atiratha—Chief warrior.

"The other whom thou seest standing in the centre like an immoveable rock, rules over the foremost of those deer of the branches; his prowess is immeasurable; for energy, glory, intelligence, strength and nobility, he stands out among those monkeys as Himavat amongst the mountains. He dwells with the principal monkey leaders in Kishkindha with its groves and trees, an inaccessible citadel of impenetrable approaches, excavated from the mountains. He wears a golden chain, wrought with a hundred lotuses in which Lakshmi, who symbolises prosperity, beloved of Gods and men, dwells. That chain, his consort Tara and the eternal empire of the monkeys, were conferred on Sugriva by Rama after he had slain Bali.

"O King, a hundred thousand multiplied by a hundred, is called a koti and a hundred thousand such kotis make one shanku. A hundred thousand shankus make one maha-shanku, a hundred thousand maha-shankus make one vrinda. A hundred thousand vrindas make a maha-vrinda and a hundred thousand maha-vrindas make a padma. A hundred thousand padmas make a maha-padma and a hundred thousand maha-padmas make a kharva. A hundred thousand kharvas make a samudra and a hundred thousand samudras make an ogna. A hundred thousand ognas make a maha-ogna. That Lord of the Monkeys as also Bibishana with his counsellors are surrounded by a hundred thousand shankus, plus a hundred thousand maha-vrindas, a hundred padmas, a hundred thousand maha-padmas, a hundred kharvas, a samudra and a maha-ogna. a koti of maha-ognas and a thousand samudras, and that Sugriva has come to make war on thee!

"Powerful is that army following the King of the Monkeys, who is ever strong and brave. In the presence of those forces that resemble a blazing meteor, O Great King, prepare thyself to vanquish the enemy and take measures to avoid defeat!"

CHAPTER 29

Ravana sends out fresh Spies

BEHOLDING those foremost of monkey leaders pointed out by Shuka—the valiant Lakshmana, Rama's right arm, his own brother Bibishana standing close to Raghava, the King of all the Monkeys, Sugriva, of exceeding prowess, the heroic Angada, grandson of the Bearer of the Thunderbolt, the powerful Hanuman and the invincible Jambavan, Sushena, Kumuda, Nila and Nala, those paragons among the monkeys, Gaja, Gavaksha, Sharabha, Mainda and Dvivida—Ravana, his heart agitated, became enraged and began to inveigh against those two heroes, Shuka and Sarana, who had completed their report.

In a voice strangled with fury, he overwhelmed them with reproaches as they stood with bowed heads before him, saying :—

"In sooth it is scarcely fitting that such unpleasing words should be uttered by loyal servants to their king who has the power to mete out punishment or reward. That you should both hymn the praises of the foe belonging to an alien race who has come here to attack me, is unbecoming ! In vain have you sat at the feet of your elders, spiritual preceptors and the aged, since the essential traditions of the scriptures do not rule your lives or, if you have imbibed them, you have not remembered them ; you are over-burdened with ignorance ! Having such unintelligent servants as you are, it is a miracle that I am still able to wield the sceptre. Have you no fear of death that you dare address me thus insolently, I, whose tongue dispenses good and evil ?

"Even in contact with fire, the forest trees may remain standing but an evil-doer cannot escape the condemnation of his sovereign ! Did the remembrance of your past services not moderate mine ire, I should certainly punish you miserable wretches by death, who thus hymn the praises of mine adversaries.

"Begone ! Go hence, leave my presence ! Having regard for your past services I shall not put you to death. You are already

dead, ungrateful creatures, since you have no devotion for me!"

Hearing these accusations, which covered them with confusion, Shuka and Sarana paid obeisance to Ravana, saying :—" Be thou victorious!" and withdrew.

Then Dashagriva said to Mahodara who stood beside him :— " Bring me other emissaries quickly!"

At this command, that Ranger of the Night, Mahodara, without delay summoned spies and these presenting themselves in all haste before the king, hailed him with joined palms and expressed their desire to see him victorious.

Thereupon Ravana, the Lord of the Titans, said to those agents who were full of confidence, courage and zeal and were fearless :—

" Go and find out Rama's plans, who are his ministers and who stand nearest to him in counsel and friendship, what are his hours of sleeping and waking and what he intends to do next.

"A wise monarch who discovers all that concerns his adversary through his spies, needs to exert himself only to a moderate degree to overcome his enemy on the field of battle."

"May it be so!" answered the emissaries full of joy and, placing Shardula at their head, they honoured their sovereign by circumambulating him. Having paid obeisance to that powerful Lord of the Titans, those spies set out for where Rama and Lakshmana were to be found.

Leaving in disguise they observed Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva and Bibishana near the Mountain Suvela. Beholding that army they were seized with terror and as they stood there, the righteous Prince of the Titans, Bibishana, recognized them and arrested them but Shardula alone was held captive, Bibishana saying :—" This one is the traitor!"

Rama however released Shardula also, who was being harassed by the monkeys, having already in his compassion given the other titans their freedom.

Beaten by those impetuous and agile monkeys, they returned to Lanka, groaning and beside themselves : and those emissaries, valiant rangers of the night, who were wont to penetrate into enemy territory, returned to Dashagriva and informed him that Rama's army was camping in the neighbourhood of the Suvela Mountain.

CHAPTER 30

Shardula gives an Account of his Mission to Ravana

THE King of Lanka's spies informed him that Rama was camping with his great army near Mount Suvela and, hearing from them of Rama's approach at the head of a vast host, he was perturbed and said to Shardula :—

" Thou appearest to be unmanned which is alien to thy nature, O Ranger of the Night ! Can it be that thou hast fallen a victim to those savage monkeys ? "

Thus questioned by that tiger among the titans, Shardula, trembling with fear, answered in a faint voice, saying :—

" O King, it is impossible to spy on those lions among the monkeys, who are full of energy and prowess and protected by Raghava nor can one interrogate them in order to find out anything ! On all sides the approaches are guarded by monkeys as big as hills.

" Scarcely had I penetrated into their ranks when I was recognized and forcibly seized and myself interrogated in every way by those monkeys, who attacked me with their knees, fists, teeth and the palms of their hands ; thereafter I was led through the entire army by those pitiless monkeys who, having paraded me everywhere, brought me into Rama's presence, exhausted and bewildered, my limbs covered with blood and wounds. They wished to murder me despite my supplications made with joined palms, when, fortunately I was saved by Rama who cried ' Stay ! ' ' Stay ! '

"That prince who has filled the sea with boulders and crags is encamped at the gates of Lanka, well equipped with weapons, his forces arranged in the form of Garuda[1] and he is surrounded on all sides by monkeys. Having set me free, he is there full of energy advancing on Lanka ! Ere he reaches the ramparts, do one thing or the other with all speed, either return Sita to him immediately or give him battle ! "

[1] In spread eagle formation.

Having reflected on what he had just heard, the King of the Titans, Ravana, made this significant reply :—

" Even were the Gods, Gandharvas and Danavas to arraign themselves against me and were the whole world in peril, I would not restore Sita."

Then that exceedingly powerful one added :—

" Thou hast explored the ranks of their army, who are the warriors among the Plavamgamas ? What is the measure of their prowess ? Who are these invincible monkeys ? Whose sons and grandsons are they ? Tell me the truth, O Faithful Friend ! "

Thus interrogated, Shardula, the most skilled of envoys, began to speak thus in Ravana's presence :—

" First there is the son of Riksharajas, invincible in war, O King, and the son of Gadgada. There follows another son of Gadgada and the son of the spiritual preceptor of Shatakratu, the father of the monkey who slew so many titans. Thereafter comes the virtuous Sushena, the valiant son of Dharma, then Saumya born of Soma, O King, and the monkey Dadimukha and Sumukha, Durmukha and Vegadarshin, the equals of Mrityu, whom Swyambhu formerly begot in the form of monkeys, and further there is the great Nila himself, the son of the Bearer of the Sacrificial Offerings[1] and the son of the Wind, Hanuman. Then there is the grandson of Shakra, the youthful, invincible and courageous Angada, and Mainda and Dvivida who are both valiant and equal to the Ashvins. Five are the sons of Vivasvata who resembles Time as the Destroyer, Gaja, Gavaya, Gavaksha, Sharabha and Gandhamadana.

" There are ten kotis of monkeys full of prowess and martial ardour and I was unable to count the rest of those fortunate children of the Gods.

" That son of Dasaratha with the body of a lion, that youth, Rama, to whom none in the world can be compared for valour, slew Dushana, Khara, Trishiras and Viradha who fell under his blows, as also Kabandha, the equal of Antaka. No one is able to describe Rama's qualities by whom the titans who went to Janasthana were slain.

" There too is the virtuous Lakshmana like unto the foremost

[1] The God of Fire.

of elephants, Matanga, in the path of whose shafts Vasava himself could not survive! There are also Shveta and Jyotirmukha, both born of Bhashkara and the son of Varuna, the monkey Hemaketu. The heroic son of Vishvakarma, the foremost of monkeys Nala, and the impetuous son of Vasu, Durdhara.

"Finally there is that prince of the titans, thy brother Bibishana, on whom Rama has conferred the City of Lanka as the reward for his devotion. Thus I have described the entire army of monkeys stationed on the Mount Suvela; it is for thee to decide what remains to be done!"

CHAPTER 31

Ravana deceives Sita about the Death of Rama

MEANWHILE the king's spies spread the tidings in Lanka that Raghava was encamped with his powerful forces on Mount Suvela.

Ravana, who knew, through his emissaries, of Rama's arrival at the head of a vast army, somewhat perturbed, said to his attendants:—

"Let all the ministers assemble here immediately! O Titans, the time has come to take counsel together!"

On this command, his counsellors instantly came together and he entered into conference with those loyal titans, then, having duly deliberated with them concerning the immediate measures to be taken, Durdharsha[1] dismissed them all and returned to his abode.

Taking with him the Titan Vidyujjihva, a powerful and skilled magician, he turned his steps towards the place where Maithili was to be found. Thereafter the King of the Titans said to Vidyujjihva, who was proficient in magic:—

"With thy spells, create an illusion in order to deceive Janaka's daughter! Do thou produce a head resembling

[1] Durdharsha—A name given to Ravana meaning 'Dreadful, Unapproachable'.

Raghava's and a mighty bow, its arrows set, and then present thyself before me ! "

On this command, that Ranger of the Night, Vidyujjihva, answered "Be it so" and displayed his powers as a magician, whereupon Ravana, satisfied, bestowed rich attire upon him.

In his impatience to behold Sita once again, that mighty monarch of the Nairritas entered the Ashoka Grove and the younger brother of Dhanada beheld that unfortunate One who did not deserve her fate, her head bowed, plunged in grief, lying on the ground in the Ashoka Grove where she had been banished, absorbed in the thought of her lord, hideous titan women seated not far distant from her.

Then Ravana, approaching, manifested his gratification and addressed that daughter of Janaka in confident tones, saying :—

" O Beautiful One, he in whom thou didst trust at the time when thou didst repel me when I sought to console thee, that murderer of Khara, thy consort Raghava, has been slain in combat. Thy roots are completely severed and thy pride humbled by me ; in consequence of the calamity that has overtaken thee, thou art mine ! Give up thy resolution therefore, what wilt thou do with one dead ? O Beautiful One, become the chief Queen over all my consorts, thou who till now hast enjoyed so little happiness, thou who art without resources ! O Foolish One, who deemest thyself wise, hear how, like unto the destruction of Vritra, thy lord was slain !

" In order to destroy me, Raghava alighted on the shore of the sea surrounded by a vast army assembled by the King of the Monkeys. Having ranged the northern shore with his great legions, Rama struck camp when the sun set. Sending out my spies to reconnoitre, they came upon that host stationed there overcome with fatigue, fast asleep at midnight.,

" Under the command of Prahasta, my great forces destroyed them during the night and Rama and Lakshmana were amongst them. The titans, wielding harpoons, maces, discus, daggers, sticks, great arrows, spears, shining Kutamudgaras, picks, lances, darts, millstones, massed weapons and a hail of missiles, made use of them again and again in order to stiike down the monkeys. Thereafter the impetuous Prahasta with a steady hand severed the head of the sleeping prince with his sword.

"Bibishana, who was wandering about aimlessly, was taken captive whilst Lakshmana and the monkey warriors fled in all directions. Sugriva, the King of the Plavagas had his neck broken, O Sita; Hanuman of the fractured jaw was slain by the titans. Jambavan, while attempting to rise from his knees perished in the mêleé like an axed tree pierced by innumerable harpoons. Mainda and Dvivida, those two great scourgers of their foes, the foremost of monkeys, groaning and breathless, their limbs bathed in blood were cut to pieces by the sword, and Panasa, crying for help, was stretched on the earth under a tree of the same name. Pierced by countless Narachas, Darimukha is lying in a pit and the exceedingly valiant Kumuda died shrieking, under a hail of missiles. Angada, assailed on all sides by titans, pierced by innumerable shafts, vomiting blood, fell on the earth and the monkeys themselves were crushed by elephants and mowed down like clouds before the wind.

"The enemy fled in terror under the blows of the titans, who followed on their heels like lions pursuing great elephants. Some flung themselves into the sea, others took refuge in the sky; the bears with the monkeys climbed the trees whilst the titans of fierce glance brought about a great carnage amongst the Pingalas in the midst of the rocks and woods on the shores of the ocean. It was thus that thy consort perished with his forces! Here is his head, which was gathered up, dripping with blood and besmeared with dust!"

Thereafter that abominable Ravana, the Lord of the Titans, said to the titan women in the hearing of Sita:—

"Bring hither Vidyujjihva of cruel deeds, who himself brought back Raghava's head from the field!"

Then Vidyujjihva, holding the head and the bow, bowed before Ravana, whereupon the King said to that Titan Vidyujjihva of the long tongue, who stood before him:—

"Let Sita speedily behold the head of Dasaratha's son so that she may see clearly the sad end of her lord."

On this command, the titan threw the cherished head at Sita's feet and immediately went away. Ravana, however, brandishing that great and brilliant bow, cried out:—

"Here is Rama's bow famed in the Three Worlds! This is the bow with its cord stretched belonging to Rama that Prahasta

brought back from the field after he had slain that hero in the night!"

Speaking thus, he cast the bow on the ground near the head, which had been thrown down by Vidyujjihva, and thereafter he addressed that illustrious daughter of the King of Videha, saying:—

"Now submit thyself to my desire!"

CHAPTER 32

Sita's Despair

BEHOLDING that head and the marvellous bow and remembering the alliance with Sugriva of which Hanuman had spoken; seeing those eyes and the hue of the countenance resembling that of her lord and the locks at the fringe of which a jewel shone on the brow, all those signs that convinced her of her misfortune, that wretched woman began to inveigh against Kaikeyi and cry out like an osprey, exclaiming:—

"Rest content, O Kaikeyi! He, who was the delight of his House is dead and, through thee, the entire race has perished, O Sower of Discord! What had the noble Rama ever done to Kaikeyi that she should have presented him with a robe of bark and sent him to the forest?"

Speaking thus, Vaidehi began to tremble and that young ascetic fell to the ground like a plantain cut to the roots. After a time the youthful large-eyed woman, regaining her breath and consciousness, approached the head and gave herself up to lamentation, crying:—

"Alas! I am undone! O Great-armed Warrior, faithful to thine heroic vow, bereft of thee, I have fallen into the lowest depth of calamity. It is said that for a woman, the death of her husband is the greatest of misfortunes! Virtuous consort of a faithful companion, thou hast preceded me in death! I have fallen into the last extremity and am swallowed up in an ocean of grief, since thou hast been struck down, thou who else had risen to deliver me! My mother-in-law, Kaushalya, who

cherished thee tenderly, thou, her son Raghava, now resembles a cow that has lost its calf. Those who boast that they can foretell the future prophesied a long life for thee; false were their words, for thou hast barely lived, O Rama, or does prudence perchance sometimes desert those who are usually prudent as thou wert, for time, the master of all beings brings all to maturity? How has death been able to steal upon thee unawares, O Thou, versed in the law of polity and the science of expediency, who wert so skilled in warding off evil? For having clasped me in thine arms, that cruel and inhuman night of death has robbed thee of existence by force, O Lotus-eyed One. Here art thou, lying on the ground, O Long-armed Warrior, having deserted me for the earth, thy more cherished love, O Lion among Men! O Hero, here lies thy golden bow so dear to me, which I anointed with perfumes and decorated with garlands! Thou art now re-united in heaven with thy Sire Dasaratha, my father-in-law and all thine ancestors, O Irreproachable Prince!

"Thou dost disdain to rejoin the saintly race of Rajarishis, who through the merit of their virtuous conduct have taken their places amongst the constellations. Why dost thou not look on me, O King? Why dost thou not speak to me, I, thy spouse, who joined my youth to thine? Dost thou not recall the promise made to me when, taking my hand in thine, thou didst say 'I shall be thy companion?' O Kakutstha, take me with thee, wretched as I am!

"Why, leaving this world for the other hast thou abandoned me in mine affliction, O Thou, the wisest of Sages? Wild beasts are tearing that beautiful body, now a corpse, which was formerly perfumed by my hands with divine essences. Having performed the Agnihotra and other sacrifices, accompanied by the bestowal of splendid gifts in charity, how is it that thou art not honoured by the performance of that same ceremony?

Kaushalya, a prey to grief will see Lakshmana alone return of the three who went into exile On her enquiry he will inform her of the destruction of thine allies and how thou wert slain while asleep, whilst I was taken into the abode of the titans, whereupon her heart will break; Kaushalya will not survive,

O Raghava! Miserable creature that I am, it is on my account that the irreproachable Rama who is full of valour, having crossed the ocean has perished in the footprint of a cow. It was in an ill-judged moment that the son of Dasaratha wedded me, I, the obloquy of my race, for thus did the illustrious Rama wed death. Without doubt in a previous existence I refused a rare gift,[1] I who to-day weep for my lord, who here was dear to all.

"O Ravana, unite the wife with the husband and, without delay, let me die near Rama. Join my head with his head and my body with his body; O Ravana, let me follow in the path of my magnanimous lord!"

Thus in her burning grief did that large-eyed princess, born of Janaka, lament on seeing the head and bow of her lord and, as Sita was thus bewailing, a titan, who was standing guard at the gate, ran to his master with joined palms, crying:—

"Mayest thou be victorious, O Noble Lord!" thereafter, approaching, he informed him of the arrival of Prahasta, the leader of the army, saying:—

"Prahasta, accompanied by all the ministers, has come hither to find thee! O Mighty Monarch, thou whom the burden of royalty has rendered forbearing, accord him audience for some urgent decision must be taken!"

Hearing these words of the titan, Dashagriva left the Ashoka Grove and went to join his counsellors. Then, having deliberated with them as to what action to pursue, he entered the council chamber and issued his commands in accordance with the knowledge he possessed of Rama's forces.

Meanwhile the instant Ravana had departed, the illusory head and bow vanished.

Then the King of the Titans, in consultation with his highly powerful ministers, decided on the measures he would adopt against Rama. All the generals devoted to his interests stood near and Ravana the Lord of the Titans resembled Death the Destroyer while he addressed them, saying:

"With the beating of drums, summon all the forces without further explanation!"

[1] Refused a rare gift—Some Commentators interpret this as having obstructed a marriage.

" So be it ! " they answered obedient to his commands and instantly gathered the vast army together and, when they were all assembled, informed the king who was burning to fight.

CHAPTER 33

Sarama consoles Sita

SEEING Sita in distress, that dear Vaidehi whom she loved so tenderly, a female titan named Sarama approached her and, with gentle words, sought to console her, overwhelmed as she was with the grief and anguish into which that Indra among the titans had plunged her.

The affectionate Sarama, beholding Sita distraught, resembling a mare, who having rolled in the dust has just risen, reassured her and, in her deep devotion for that virtuous princess, said to her :—

" That which Ravana uttered and what thou thyself didst reply was overheard by me as I stood concealed in the solitary grove, for where thou art the cause, I have no fear of Ravana, O Lady of Large Eyes ! And I have also learnt, through my perspicacity, why that Lord of the Titans has gone hence in fear, O Maithili.

" It is not possible to take the prudent Rama by surprise during sleep nor can one slay the foremost of those conversant with the Ṣelf nor is it possible to wipe out the monkeys who fight with trees and who are under Rama's protection like the Gods under the King of the Celestials. With his long rounded arms, that broad-chested powerful archer, full of fire, clad in mail, who is essentially virtuous and renowned in the world, has, with the support of his brother Lakshmana, ever known how to defend himself and others ; he, that illustrious warrior versed in the science of politics and warfare, the exterminator of hostile battalions, of inconceivable courage, nay that fortunate Raghava, the scourge of his foes, has not perished, O Sita.

" Perverse in thought and action, that tyrant who oppresses all beings, made use of magic to deceive thee. Banish thy

grief, great happiness awaits thee! Assuredly thou art beloved of Lakshmi; now hear some pleasant tidings, O Blessed One!

"Having crossed the ocean with his army of monkeys, Rama has come to the southern shore where he has encamped. I perceive that Kakutstha, who is accompanied by Lakshmana, has fully attained his purpose, he is secure in the midst of innumerable allies who have halted on the shores of the sea.

"Zealous titans sent out to reconnoitre by Ravana have brought him news of Raghava's crossing the ocean. Learning of this, O Large-eyed Princess, he held a council of his ministers."

While Sarama, the titan woman, was conversing thus with Sita, a terrifying clamour issuing from the full-throated titans came to her ears and a great din of gongs struck with sticks could be heard. Thereupon the gentle-speaking Sarama said to Sita:—

"Listen to that formidable clang of gongs struck with sticks which resembles thunder. Intoxicated elephants are saddled and steeds harnessed to chariots; hosts of combatants are to be seen with darts in their hands mounted on their horses, fully equipped, rushing hither and thither in their thousands. The royal highways are choked with soldiers wonderful to behold, leaping and roaring like the waves of the sea. Glittering armour, breast-plates, shields, chariots, horses and elephants belonging to the titans full of fire and courage, surging forward, follow in the wake of their king. See how they send forth shafts of light of every hue. That multitude of titans indicates that a terrible calamity is about to descend on them causing the hair to stand on end.

"Rama, thy consort, whose eyes resemble lotus petals, like unto Vasava the Vanquisher of the Daityas, will win thee back by slaying Ravana in combat by his unimaginable prowess, whereupon, his anger appeased, he will take thee away. Thy lord with Lakshmana will fall on the titans as Vasava with Vishnu on his enemies the Daityas. I shall soon see thee in the lap of Rama who has come hither, all thy desires fulfilled and the tyrant fallen. Tears of joy will fall from thine eyes, O Janaki, when thy lord, re-united with thee, will hold thee clasped to his breast. Ere long, O Divine Sita, that mighty

Rama will loosen the plait that hangs down thy back which thou hast worn these many months.

"Beholding his radiant countenance resembling the full moon, O Queen, thou wilt renounce thy tears, born of grief, as the female snake casts off its slough.

"Having destroyed Ravana in combat, he will assuredly not delay in rejoicing thee, O Maithili, thou, his beloved, so that he may enjoy the felicity he merits. Embraced by the magnanimous Rama, thou shalt be happy, even as the open field bringing forth a harvest under plenteous showers. Do thou now seek refuge with him, O Queen, that sun, thine haven, which spreads from here to the highest of mountains, like a steed that courses rapidly in its path, he is the Lord of all beings!"

CHAPTER 34

Sarama spies on Ravana's Plans

SITA, who had been overwhelmed with misery on hearing Ravana's words, was comforted and rendered happy by Sarama, as the parched earth by rain. Desiring to be of further service to her friend, the affectionate female titan, skilled in the knowledge of time and place, smiling, began to speak in apposite terms, saying:—

"O Dark-eyed Lady, I am able to carry a message of goodwill from thee to Rama and return secretly, for when I am journeying in the sky, that is extended without support, not even Pavana or Garuda can follow in my wake."

Thus spoke Sarama, and Sita, her voice no longer charged with grief, answered in gentle and caressing tones, saying:—

"Thou art capable of ascending to heaven itself or descending into the nethermost regions. Learn what is best for thee to do, if thine intention is to please me and thy resolve is fixed. I wish to know what Ravana is doing now. That powerful magician, the ruthless Ravana, a real Ravana[1] to his foes, has bemused me with his wickedness as wine recently imbibed;

[1] Ravana—One who causes others to roar or cry out.

he threatens me continually and insults me unceasingly while titans of frightful aspect surround me ; I am a prey to terror and my spirit is uneasy. He causes me to tremble with fear in this Ashoka Grove where I am confined. If in the assembly there be any talk of delivering me or keeping me captive, then communicate the decision taken to me and thou wilt render me a great service."

Thus spoke Sita and Sarama answered in gentle tones, wiping the tears from her face the while :—

"If this be thy wish, I will go at once and when I have discovered his design, I will return, O Maithili, O Daughter of Janaka ! "

With these words she returned to where Ravana was to hear what decision he had taken with his ministers.

Having listened secretly and learnt of the plans that perverse wretch had made, she returned to the enchanting Ashoka Grove. On entering there, she beheld the daughter of Janaka waiting for her, like unto Lakshmi bereft of her lotus.

Thereupon Sita ardently embraced Sarama who had returned and addressed her in friendly tones, offering her her own seat, saying :—

"Rest at ease and tell me exactly all that the ruthless Ravana of perverse soul has resolved to do."

Then Sarama described the whole interview of Ravana with his ministers to the trembling Sita, saying :—

"The mother of the King of the Titans, through an aged counsellor, who is devoted to her, insisted again and again that they should let Vaidehi go, saying :—

"'Let them return Maithili honourably to that King of Men! His astonishing exploits in Janasthana should be a lesson to thee ; what mortal could have accomplished the crossing of the ocean, the discovery of Sita by Hanuman and the carnage of the titans in combat ?'

"Thus did the elderly minister and his mother exhort him but he is no more capable of giving up his treasure than a miser his gold. He will never set thee free unless he is slain in combat, O Maithili ; such is the resolve of that wicked wretch made with his counsellors ; impelled by death his determination is fixed. Fear will never cause Ravana to let thee go ; nor will he do so

till he is struck down by weapons or all the titans and he himself have succumbed. When he has destroyed Ravana with his sharp arrows in combat, Rama will take thee back to Ayodhya, O Dark-eyed Lady!"

At that moment the cheering of the whole army blended with the roll of drums and the blare of trumpets arose and the earth shook. That tumult raised by the monkey forces was heard by the adherents of the King of the Titans, who were assembled in Lanka, and their spirits fell. Seeing no hope on account of their sovereign's offence they were plunged in despondency.

CHAPTER 35

Malyavan advises Ravana to make peace

It was to the beating of gongs and the blare of trumpets that the long-armed Rama, the conqueror of hostile cities, approached Lanka and, on hearing this tumult, the Lord of the Titans paused a moment to reflect and then addressed his ministers.

The mighty Ravana, in a voice that resounded through the hall, began to decry Rama, his valour, the strength of his arms and his crossing of the ocean, saying :—

"I have heard all that is reported of Rama; I know too of your courage in the field, yet, on beholding that valiant warrior, you now look on each other in silence!"

Thereupon hearing the words of Ravana, whose maternal grandfather he was, the highly intelligent Titan Malyavan answered him thus :—

"O King, that monarch who is versed in the fourteen sciences, who follows polity, rules an empire over a long period and overcomes his adversaries, who concludes peace or wages war at a fitting time, advances his own party and attains great power. A monarch should ally himself to one stronger than himself or to an equal; he should never underrate a foe and if he is more powerful, should make war on him. On this account I counsel an alliance with Rama and the return of Sita

who is the actual cause of the dispute. Devas, Rishis, Gandharvas, all desire him to triumph; do not wage war but resolve to make peace with him!

"The blessed Grandsire created two paths that rest either on righteousness or unrighteousness, the path of the Gods and the path of the titans. Righteousness is the path of the magnanimous Immortals and unrighteousness that of the demons and titans. When virtue consumed evil, it was the Krita Age and when wrong-doing swallowed up virtue, the Tishya planet was in the ascendant and thou, adopting unrighteousness, didst range the worlds destroying virtue; it is on account of this that thy foes have waxed powerful! The serpent of evil, nourished by thy folly, is now consuming us, while those allied with the Gods are fortified by their practice of virtue. A slave of the senses, all that thou undertakest excites the wrath of the ascetics, those personifications of the Fire-God whose power is as irresistible as the glowing flames. They purify their souls through austerities and find satisfaction in the performance of their duty. In truth, those Twice-born offer innumerable and excellent sacrifices, kindling the sacred fire in accordance with prescribed rituals; they recite the Vedas in a loud voice and utter sacred texts while subduing the titans. Scattered in all directions, like the stormy waves during the hot season, the smoke, arising from the Agnihotra performed by those Rishis, the equals of Agni, spreads over the ten cardinal points and diminishes the titans' energy. In the various regions sanctified by their religious observances, the burning austerity of those ascetics torments the titans.

"Thou hast received the boon of invincibility from Devas, Danavas and Yakshas but these are men, bears and powerful Golangulas who, full of energy and prowess, are coming hither roaring like lions. Beholding these sinister and formidable portents of every kind, I foresee the total extermination of the titans. With a terrifying clamour, monstrous clouds, inspiring horror, rain hot blood on Lanka on every side. Those beasts drawing the chariots are shedding tears. Discoloured with dust, the four quarters no longer shine; serpents, jackals and vultures are invading Lanka, gathering in the public squares with frightful cries; standing before us in dream, coal black

women with white teeth resembling Kali burst into loud laughter, pillaging the dwellings and chattering incoherently; in the houses, dogs devour the sacred offerings and donkeys are born of cows, rats of mongoose; cats mate with tigers, pigs with dogs and Kinneras with demons and men. Red-footed and white pigeons, messengers of death, by their flight foretell the extermination of the titans; domesticated parrots, falling under the attack of other birds, call 'Chichikuchi'! Birds and wild beasts, their eyes fixed on the sun, cry out! Death in the shape of a human monster, deformed, bald and tawny-coloured, visits the dwellings in turn. These and other omens equally sinister appear. Raghava of fixed prowess is, I deem, Vishnu in human form; he is undoubtedly no mere man; he who built a bridge over the deep is an exceedingly wonderful being! Therefore, O Ravana, for thine own good, conclude peace with Rama who is the king of men."

Having spoken thus, Malyavan, the bravest of warriors, aware of what was passing in Ravana's mind, eyeing him, became silent.

CHAPTER 36

Ravana directs Lanka's Defences

Dashanana[1] could not brook Malyavan's salutory utterances and, scowling, a prey to anger, rolling his eyes in fury, answered him thus:—

"I have closed mine ears to the speech thou hast made, albeit with good intentions; how canst thou hold a mere man like Rama, who is single-handed, without any support but that of the deer of the trees, cast off by his sire and exiled to the forest, to be of my stature, I, the Lord of the Titans, the terror of the Gods? Dost thou then consider me to be destitute of power?

"I am at a loss to determine if it be envy of my prowess or predeliction for the foe that has brought thee to address such

[1] Ten-faced One.

hard words to me, unless it be that thou desirest to spur me on! In truth, what man learned in the science of the Shastras would speak thus harshly to a seasoned warrior, were it not to incite him?

"Having borne Sita away from the forest, she who resembles Shri bereft of her lotus, why, through fear, should I return her to Raghava? Thou shalt see him fall under my blows in the midst of the innumerable monkeys who surround him. How should Ravana, whom the Deities themselves dare not meet in single combat, experience fear in this encounter? Rather would I be cut in twain than bend before any! Such was I from birth, it is my nature and unalterable! Even if Rama by some happy chance has been able to throw a bridge over the sea, what great marvel is there in that, that thou shouldst give way to terror? It is true he has crossed the ocean with an army of monkeys but I swear to thee he will not return alive."

Beholding Ravana to be highly provoked and speaking with such fury, Malyavan, abashed, did not reply and duly invoking his success as courtesy demanded, he begged permission to retire.

Meanwhile Ravana, assisted by his ministers, having deliberated on what ought to be done, set about planning the defence of Lanka.

Thereafter he gave over the eastern gate to the Titan Prahasta and that of the south to the warriors Mahaparshwa and Mahodara. At the western gate he placed his son Indrajita, a powerful magician, with a considerable force of titans and he established Shuka and Sarana at the northern gate, saying:—

"I myself shall take up that position also!"

Finally he commanded the Titan Virupaksha, who was full of energy and courage, to occupy the centre of the city with a large number of soldiers.

Taking every precaution for the safety of Lanka, that bull among the titans, under the sway of destiny, deemed his purpose accomplished. Having made provision for the defence of the city, he dismissed his ministers and received the acclamations of the assembly, after which he entered his sumptuous inner apartments.

CHAPTER 37

Rama makes his Plans for the Attack

MEANWHILE that King of Men, the Sovereign of the Monkeys, the Son of the Wind, Jambavan the King of the Bears, the Titan Bibishana with Bali's son Angada and Saumitri, the Ape Sharabha, also Sushena and his kinsfolk Mainda and Dvivida, Gaja, Gavaksha, Kumuda, Nala and Panasa, all having reached the enemy's territory, assembled to take counsel together.

They said :—" Yonder under our very eyes is the City of Lanka defended by Ravana, impregnable even to the Gods and Asuras together or the Uragas and Gandharvas. Let us take counsel as to what means to adopt that will ensure the success of our expedition in order to penetrate into the eternal retreat of Ravana, the King of the Titans."

At this, the younger brother of Ravana, Bibishana, uttered these words that were both just and irreproachable :—

" Anala, Panasa, Sampati and Pramati have been to Lanka from whence they have returned. Assuming the form of birds, all four entered that hostile citadel and studied the measures taken by Ravana closely. I will give a detailed report as it was given to me of the defences organized by that perverse wretch ; O Rama, hear me !

" At the eastern gate, Prahasta is stationed with his division; at the southern gate are the warriors Mahaparshwa and Mahodara ; Indrajita is at the western gate where he is in command of a considerable force armed with harpoons, swords, bows, spears and hammers. Ravana's son has thousands of warriors under his command, holding lances in their hands, furnished with weapons of every kind.

" Apprehensive, a prey to great anxiety, Ravana, versed in the sacred formulas, is himself stationed with the titans at the northern gate. As for Virupaksha, he, with a strong detachment armed with spears, clubs and bows occupies the centre of the city.

"Having seen these hosts thus distributed, my spies have set out in all haste and returned again. The elephants number some ten thousand, the cavalry twenty thousand and there are more than a million foot soldiers. Hardy and vigorous, these intrepid warriors have ever been their sovereign's favourites; each of the titan generals, when on campaign, commands a million soldiers, O Lord of Men."

Having conveyed this information concerning the city, the mighty Bibishana brought his envoys before Rama and those titans confirmed all that was known regarding Lanka. Thereafter the younger brother of Ravana, in his desire to please Raghava, addressed that Lotus-eyed One further, saying :—

"O Rama, when Ravana made war on Kuvera, seven million soldiers accompanied him. For vigour, daring, energy, extreme power of endurance and pride, they equalled their wicked king. There is no question here of my wishing to agitate thee by what I have said but a desire to rouse thine indignation, not thy fears, for in knightly valour, thou art equal to the Gods themselves. Having set out these monkey forces in battle array, thou shalt destroy Ravana with thy great army composed of four angas[1] which surround thee."

Bibishana having spoken thus, Raghava gave his orders for the attack, saying :—

"At the eastern gate, Nila, that lion among monkeys, should oppose Prahasta with his innumerable infantry and let Bali's son, Angada, at the head of a strong division, drive away Mahaparshwa and Mahodara from the southern gate; that son of the Wind, whose valour is immeasurable, will penetrate into the city with his great forces.

"I reserve the right to slay the wicked King of the Titans, who owing to the boon he has received enjoys oppressing the Daityas and Danavas as also the magnanimous Rishis and who ranges the worlds persecuting all beings. With the aid of Saumitri I shall force an entry through the northern gate and follow in the wake of Ravana and his army. Let the mighty Indra among Monkeys, the valiant King of the Bears and the younger brother of the Lord of the Titans occupy the central position.

[1] Angas—lit. limbs, probably divisions.

" The monkeys should not assume human form in the fray for, when we are fighting in the ranks, the monkey shape should serve as a sign of recognition amongst us. Seven will attack the foe in human form, I, my brother Lakshmana, who is full of valour, my friend Bibishana and his four companions."

Having said this to Bibishana for the success of the enterprise, Rama, in the role of a wise leader, decided to stay on Mount Suvela whose ravishing slopes he had observed.

Thereafter at the head of his great army which spread over the earth, the magnanimous Rama set out for Lanka with a joyous and exultant air, resolved to destroy his enemy.

CHAPTER 38

The Ascent of Mount Suvela

HAVING resolved to stay on Mount Suvela, Rama, followed by Lakshmana, addressed Sugriva and also Bibishana the night-ranger, who was full of integrity, devotion, sagacity and experience and, in tones of great sweetness and nobility, said :—

" Let us ascend the Mount Suvela, that king of peaks and plateaus, filled with hundreds of metallic veins, in order to pass the night there. Then we shall be able to survey Lanka, the haunt of that titan, that wretch who has borne away my consort to his own destruction ! He has neither regard for justice, virtue nor the honour of his House, he, who, in consequence of his base nature, has committed this heinous deed."

Thus reflecting and censuring Ravana, Rama approached Mount Suvela with its ravishing slopes and began the ascent. Behind him came Lakshmana, proud of his great valour, alert, bearing his bow and arrows and Sugriva, who with his ministers and Bibishana scaled the mountain also. Those rangers of the hills bounded with the speed of the wind scrambling from a hundred sides at once in the steps of Raghava and did not take long to reach the summit.

From there they observed that splendid city with its marvellous gates enclosed in magnificent ramparts, as if suspended in the

air; thus did Lanka, filled with warriors, appear to those monkey leaders and, standing on those wonderful ramparts, the dark-hued titans resembled a second wall in the eyes of the foremost monkeys. Beholding them, the monkeys, in Rama's presence, burning to fight, redoubled their cries.

Meanwhile the sun, dyed with the fires of dusk, moved towards the west, and the night, illumined by the full moon, drew on. Then Rama, the leader of the monkey army, having exchanged salutations with Bibishana, established himself happily on the breast of Mount Suvela with the leaders of the monkeys.

CHAPTER 39

Description of Lanka

HAVING passed the night on Mount Suvela, the valiant monkey generals surveyed the woods and groves of Lanka and observing them to be so extensive, agreeable, pleasant, vast and wide, marvellous to behold, they were seized with admiration.

Champakas, Ashokas, Bakulas, Salas and Talas abounded; Tamalas, Hintalas, Arjunas, Nipas, Saptaparnas in full flower, Nagas, Tilakas, Karnikaras and Patalas grew on every side. The trees with their flowering crests, round which magnificent creepers twined, gave Lanka a brilliant appearance which she owed also to the borders planted with diverse flowers and red and tender buds as also innumerable shady avenues. The blossom and fragrant fruit with which the trees were laden caused them to resemble men adorned with jewels or the ravishing Chaitaratha, the equal of the Nandana Gardens, a grove resplendently green in all seasons, filled with swarming bees and sparkling with beauty. Then the valiant monkeys able to change their shape at will penetrated into those groves frequented by waterfowl intoxicated with love and with honey bees where the branches of the trees were filled with cuckoos and resounded to the notes of the shrike and the cry of the osprey and, as they entered there, a breeze redolent with the scent of flowers blew like a soft breath.

Meanwhile some of the leaders broke away from the monkey ranks and, with the permission of their prince, approached that paved city. Terrifying the birds, deer and elephants, they shook Lanka with their roaring, excelling as they did in shouting and, in their immense ardour, they trampled down the earth so that the dust rose in clouds under their feet.

Bears, lions, buffalo, wild elephants, antelopes and birds, alarmed by the noise, spread over the ten points of the horizon.

The Trikuta Mountain had an exceedingly lofty summit that appeared to touch the skies; it was covered with blossom, sparkling like gold, a hundred leagues in extent, stainless, graceful to behold, smooth, inaccessible in height even to birds and could not be scaled even in thought, much less in reality; it was on this promontory that Lanka was built of which Ravana was the highway.

Ten leagues wide, twenty in length, with its tall gates which resembled white clouds and its ramparts of gold and silver, it was a very marvel! Palaces and temples were the splendid decoration of that city, as clouds at the end of summer are to the region of Vishnu that is found between earth and heaven.

In Lanka, a building of a thousand pillars artistically constructed, resembling the peak of Kailasha which seemed to lick the firmament, was to be seen. This was the retreat of the Indra of the Titans and the ornament of the city, guarded constantly by a hundred titans. Ravishing with its gold, the mountains served as its decoration and it was dazzling with its rich parks and many squares re-echoing to the song of birds of every kind, frequented by deer, covered with various flowers, inhabited by titans of every degree, and that opulent city of immense resources resembled the celestial regions.

Beholding that auspicious capital, the valiant elder brother of Lakshmana was seized with astonishment and Rama with his vast army contemplated that citadel filled with treasure, abundantly provisioned, garlanded with palaces, exceedingly strong, with its powerful engines of war and solid gates.

CHAPTER 40

The extraordinary Combat between Sugriva and Ravana

THEN Rama, accompanied by Sugriva and his monkey leaders, ascended the summit of Mount Suvela that had a circumference of two leagues; there he halted awhile, surveying the ten cardinal points and his gaze fell on Lanka which was ravishing with its enchanting groves that had been built by Vishvakarma on the summit of the Trikuta Mountain.

There above a gateway stood the invincible Lord of the Titans, white chanwaras being waved above him and the triumphal parasol indicating his rank. Anointed with red sandal-paste, adorned with scarlet ornaments, he was attired in raiment embroidered with gold and resembled a dark cloud. The scars of the wounds, inflicted on him by Airavata with his tusks, pitted his breast, and he was wrapped in a cloak of the colour of hare's blood so that he appeared like unto a cloud dyed with the tints of sunset.

The Indra of the Monkeys beheld him as Raghava also and, on seeing him, Sugriva, gathering up his strength, in an impulse of fury suddenly bounded from the summit of the mountain and descended at the gate. For a moment he paused, then with a fearless soul he eyed that titan whom he regarded as a mere straw and thereafter addressed him harshly, saying :—

"I am the friend of the Protector of the Worlds, Rama; by the grace of that King of Kings thou shalt not escape me to-day."

Speaking thus he suddenly leapt upon him and, snatching off his brilliant diadem, threw it on the earth.

Seeing him about to rush upon him again, that Ranger of the Night said to him :—

"Sugriva thou wert unknown to me, now thou shalt be Hinagriva![1]"

Speaking thus, he threw himself upon him and with his two arms flung him to the ground. Bouncing up like a ball, that monkey struck his adversary in his turn and perspiration broke

[1] Sugriva meaning 'handsome-necked' and Hinagriva 'neckless'.

out on the limbs of both and their bodies were red with blood; each clung to the other, paralysing his opponent's movements and they resembled the Shalmali and Kimshuka Trees.

Then followed blows and slaps with hands and arms and an indescribable struggle arose between the two powerful kings, the Lords of the Titans and Monkeys. Hard and long was the combat between these two doughty champions in the gateway, each in turn lifting the other up, crouching and changing their positions, tripping each other and throwing each other down, crushing one another, bruising each other's limbs, and, falling between the Sala Trees and the moat, they would leap up again, pausing an instant to regain their breath. Then, with arms interlaced like ropes, they remained locked together, struggling and furious, full of skill and energy, moving to and fro. Like a lion and a tiger or two young elephants, that have just grown their tusks, scrutinising each other, with arms interlaced and grappling with one another, they fell on the earth together. Thereafter, rising, they hurled themselves on each other afresh, circling round the arena again and again, like skilled and mighty wrestlers nor were they easily fatigued. Like unto great tuskers, with their enormous arms resembling the trunks, they gripped each other tightly. Circling round and round in that duel which was long and fierce, they trampled down the earth and, approaching each other, like two wild cats fighting over a piece of meat, each tried to kill his adversary. Taking up diverse postures, describing innumerable evolutions, running like an ox's urine, halting, coming and going, they executed a myriad different movements; stepping sideways, making feints, twisting to avoid a blow, turning about, darting to the attack, each hurling himself on his opponent, standing firm and erect, disengaging themselves, presenting back and flank, preparing to leap, letting go or stealing away, thus Sugriva and Ravana, to their utmost satisfaction, multiplied such feats in which they excelled.

Meanwhile the titan had recourse to magic and when the King of the Monkeys perceived it, he flew into the sky triumphant, shaking off all fatigue whilst Ravana, overcome with exhaustion, breathing heavily, baffled by the King of the Monkeys, stood confounded.

Thus the Lord of the Monkeys, acquiring fame as a warrior, having wearied Ravana in combat, ascended into the infinite blue with the swiftness of thought, and that offspring of the Sun, having accomplished this feat, delighted, rejoined the army, honoured by the monkey leaders, thereby increasing the joy of the foremost of the Raghus.

CHAPTER 41

Rama sends Angada to Ravana

SEEING him bearing the marks of valour, the elder brother of Lakshmana, Rama, embracing him, said to Sugriva :—

" Without consulting me thou hast acted thus imprudently ; such rashness is not seemly in a king. By thy recklessness thou hast caused me great anxiety as also the army and Bibishana! O Warrior, thou art enamoured of deeds of daring ! Do not act thus in the future, O Vanquisher of thy Foes ! If thou hadst come by some misfortune, what would Sita or Bharata or my younger brothers, Lakshmana or Shatrughna have availed me ?

" O Valiant Scourge of Thy Foes, if thou hadst not returned, though I am conversant with thy valour, this was my fixed resolve ; having destroyed Ravana in fight with his sons, forces and chariots, I should have installed Bibishana as King of Lanka, suffered Bharata to ascend the throne and renounced my life, O Great Prince."

At these words of Rama, Sugriva answered, saying :—

" Seeing the one who had borne away thy consort, O Brave Descendant of Raghu, conscious of mine own strength, how could I have acted otherwise ? "

Thus spoke that warrior, and Raghava, having commended him, addressed Lakshmana who was endowed with auspicious marks, saying :—

" Beside these cool waters and trees laden with fruit, let us divide and marshal our forces, O Lakshmana ! I foresee a terrible calamity boding universal destruction and death to the intrepid bears, monkeys and titans. Harsh winds blow, the

earth trembles and the mountains quake; trees crash to the earth, sinister clouds resembling birds of prey roar in terrifying wise and let fall rain mixed with blood; the dusk, red as sandal, is full of horror and from the sun, a flaming circle falls. Wild beasts and birds emit frantic cries and are ill at ease; their voices and fierce aspect deprive them of their beauty. In the night, the moon, shorn of its radiance, surrounded by black and fiery rays, burns red, as at the time of the destruction of the world. A thin, dark, sinister rim of coppery hue is seen round the sun and on its surface a black mark appears nor does that orb approach any other planets as is usual, all of which prefigures the final dissolution of the world.

" Behold, O Lakshmana, how crows, eagles and vultures are flying low, circulating rapidly, emitting piercing and lugubrious cries! The earth changed to mud and gore will be covered with rocks, javelins and darts hurled by the monkeys and titans! This very day, surrounded by the monkeys on all sides, let us make an attack on that citadel defended by Ravana."

Having spoken thus to Lakshmana, his younger brother, that mighty warrior rapidly descended from the summit of the mountain and coming to the bottom of that hill, the virtuous Raghava inspected his army which was invincible to the foe. Then, the time having come, Rama, who was conversant with the fitting moment to act, gave the signal to advance and, at an auspicious moment, bow in hand, turned towards Lanka.

Bibishana, Sugriva, Hanuman, Nala, Jambavan the King of the Bears, as also Nila and Lakshmana followed, and behind them the mighty host of bears and monkeys, covering a vast stretch of earth, threw themselves in Raghava's wake. Hundreds of rocks and enormous trees served as weapons to those monkeys, verily the vanquishers of their foes, who resembled elephants.

Soon the two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, those subduers of the foe, reached the city of Ravana, garlanded with banners, enchanting with the pleasure gardens which adorned it, inaccessible with its many gateways, high walls and arches. Then those denizens of the forests, encouraged by the sound of Rama's voice and obedient to his commands, halted before Lanka, which was impregnable, even to the Gods.

Thereafter Rama, accompanied by his younger brother, bow

in hand, surveyed the northern gate, which was as high as the peak of a mountain and took up his position there. That valiant son of Dasaratha, followed by Lakshmana, advanced under the walls of Lanka, whose highway was Ravana. None but Rama could have approached and examined the northern gate where Ravana stood, which was formidable and guarded by him as the ocean by Varuna and which was defended on all sides by titans, as the Danavas, who sow terror in the hearts of the weak, guard Patala. And Rama observed innumerable weapons and armour of every kind heaped there for the combatants.

Meanwhile Nila took up his position with Mainda and Dvivida at the eastern gate at the head of a host of monkeys.

Angada with his vast forces, assisted by Rishabha, Gavaksha, Gaja and Gavaya, occupied the southern gate. Hanuman, that virtuous monkey, was stationed at the western gate with Prajangha, Tarasa and other warriors grouped round him, whilst Sugriva, personally occupied an observation post in the centre. At the head of all those leading monkeys, the equals of Suparna and Pavana, thirty-six kotis of renowned warriors were grouped round Sugriva.

Meanwhile, under Rama's command, Lakshmana, assisted by Bibishana, distributed his innumerable divisions at each gate. Behind Rama, Sushena and Jambavan, those lions among the monkeys, possessing the teeth of tigers, furnished with trees and rocks, waited delightedly for the signal to fight. Lashing their tails feverishly, they used their jaws and nails as weapons ; trembling in every limb, their faces were set grimly and they were extremely strong, some having the strength of ten elephants, some ten times more powerful, some equalling a thousand elephants in might and there were some who had the vigour of a million elephants and even more, for the might of those monkey leaders was immeasurable ! Marvellous and astonishing was the gathering of those monkey forces resembling a cloud of locusts ! The earth and the air were filled with monkeys rushing towards Lanka or already stationed beneath its walls. By hundreds and hundreds of thousands, bears and monkeys poured towards the gates of Lanka that others assailed on every side. The hills disappeared completely under that

host of Plavamgamas, numbering millions, who were ranging round the city and those heroic monkeys, with tree trunks in their hands, surrounded the whole of Lanka that even the winds were unable to penetrate.

Then the titans, who in their valour rivalled Shakra, seeing themselves besieged by those monkeys like massed clouds, were struck with a sudden terror, and, as they broke rank, a tremendous clamour arose from that host of combatants which resembled the roar of the ocean beating against the shore! At this tumult, the whole of Lanka with its ramparts, arches, hills, woods and forests, began to tremble.

Under the direction of Rama, Lakshmana and Sugriva, that army became even more invincible than the hosts of the Gods and titans. Raghava, however, having ranged his forces in order to wipe out the demons, took counsel with his ministers and pondered deeply again and again. Desiring to act without delay and with circumspection, he, in his consummate experience with Bibishana's approbation, calling to mind the duty of kings[1], summoned Bali's son, Angada and said to him :—

" Go My Friend on my behalf and, passing through the City of Lanka without fear, say to Dashagriva :—' Thou hast sacrificed thy renown, destroyed thy kingdom and, in thine haste to die, hast lost thy wits! Rishis, Devas, Gandharvas, Apsaras, Nagas, Yakshas and kings, O Ranger of the Night, have been oppressed by thee in thy reckless pride. O Titan, from now on, that arrogance, begot of the boon thou didst receive from Swyambhu, shall be subdued! I shall inflict a fitting penalty for thy ruthless abduction of my consort; it is with the Rod of Chastisement, that I have stationed myself at Lanka's gates.[2] Having displayed thy martial valour, slain by me thou shalt attain the region of the Gods! Do thou demonstrate the same courage that thou didst employ in bearing Sita away from me, having first deceived me by magic arts. O Most Vile of Titans, I shall rid the earth of titans with my pointed shafts, if thou dost not make an appeal to my clemency by returning Maithili to me.

[1] Duty of Kings—If a king is able to accomplish his purpose by conciliation, he must not use force.

[2] That is, in the form of Dandadhara, a name of Death as the Bearer of the Rod of Retribution.

" 'That virtuous prince of the titans, the illustrious Bibishana, who is here, will undoubtedly reign in Lanka without opposition. Nay, it is not fitting that, even for an instant, the crown should belong to one as perfidious as thou art, a wicked creature who surroundest thyself with fools and who is not conversant with the Self!

" 'Enter into combat with me, O Titan, exert thy strength and valour in the fight, mine arrows will chasten thee and thou wilt be subdued! Even shouldst thou range the Three Worlds in the form of a bird, O Night-ranger, my glance would follow thee and thou wouldst not return alive. I give thee this salutory counsel—prepare for thine obsequies, let Lanka regain her splendour, thy life is in my hands!' "

Furnished with Rama's instructions, the son of Tara ascended into the air, like unto the God bearing away a sacrificial offering, and in an instant arrived at Ravana's palace where he beheld him seated at ease amidst his ministers.

That youthful Prince of the Monkeys, Angada of golden bracelets, like a flaming torch descended close to the king and having made himself known, addressed the whole of Rama's exceedingly significant speech, without adding or subtracting anything, to him in the presence of his court, saying:—

"I am the messenger of the King of Koshala, Rama of imperishable exploits. I am the son of Bali, Angada is my name; perchance thou hast heard of me? The descendant of Raghu, Rama, the increaser of Kaushalya's delight, speaks thus to thee:—

" 'Come forth and enter into combat with me! Manifest thy valour! I shall destroy thee, thy counsellors, thy sons, relatives and allies. Thou being dead, the Three Worlds will cease to be troubled, O Thou whose enemies are the Devas, Danavas, Yakshas, Gandharvas, Uragas and Rakshasas; thou thorn in the side of the ascetics! Bibishana will become king when thou art slain by me, if thou dost not return Vaidehi, having paid her every homage, and cast thyself at my feet!' "

Hearing these harsh words from that lion among the monkeys, the Lord of the Titans, infuriated, issued the following command repeatedly to his attendants, saying:—"Seize him and put him to death!"

On this order being given by Ravana, Angada, who in his splendour resembled a blazing torch, was seized by four terrible titans and the son of Tara suffered himself to be made captive, without offering any resistance, for that valiant warrior desired to display his prowess to the host of Yatudhanas. Thereafter, seizing three of the titans, like unto serpents in his arms, he leapt on to the palace that resembled a mountain. Shaken by his impetuous bound the three titans fell to the ground under the eyes of their king. Then the powerful son of Bali scaled the palace up to its roof, which equalled the summit of a mountain in height, and the impact of his bounds caused it to crumble before Dashagriva's gaze as a peak in the Himalayas is shattered by lightning.

Having destroyed the roof of the palace, Angada proclaimed his name and with a triumphant roar rose into the air. To the exceeding terror of the titans and the great delight of the apes, he alighted in the midst of the monkeys beside Rama.

Thereupon Ravana, transported with anger, giving himself up for lost began to sigh heavily. Meanwhile Rama, who was surrounded by Plavamgamas emitting joyful cries, eager to destroy his adversary, advanced to meet him in combat.

Now Sushena was at the head of innumerable monkeys who were able to change their form at will and, under the order of Sugriva, he patrolled the gates and that invincible warrior resembled the moon moving amidst the stars.

Seeing the hundreds of divisions encamped under the walls of Lanka and marshalled on the shores of the sea, the titans were amazed whilst some were terror-struck and others, overjoyed at the prospect of fighting, leapt in exultation. Beholding those hosts occupying the whole space between the walls and the moat, however, and seeing the monkeys like unto a second rampart, those rangers of the night, cast down, cried out :—
" Woe ! Alas ! " in their terror.

In the midst of that appalling tumult, the soldiers of Ravana seized hold of their powerful weapons and advanced like the winds that blow at the dissolution of the worlds.

CHAPTER 42

The Titans make a Sortie

THEN those titans approached the abode of Ravana and informed him that Rama and the monkeys had laid siege to the city.

This news enraged that Ranger of the Night, who, repeating his former commands went up into the palace. From there he surveyed Lanka with its hills, woods and groves, which was besieged on all sides by countless divisions of monkeys, eager to fight. Beholding the earth all brown with innumerable Plavagas, in great perplexity he reflected: " How can they be exterminated ? "

Having pondered long, Ravana regained his confidence and, opening his great eyes wide, he gazed on Raghava and the simian battalions.

Meanwhile Rama, at the head of his army was rapidly advancing on Lanka which was guarded on all sides and thronged with titans. Thereafter the son of Dasaratha, seeing that city furnished with flags and banners, remembered Sita and was filled with anguish. He reflected " That daughter of Janaka whose eyes resemble a young doe's, will be a prey to anxiety on my account! Consumed with grief and emaciated, she is pining away, the bare ground her bed! "

Reflecting on the sufferings of Vaidehi, the virtuous Raghava speedily issued a command to the monkeys to prepare for the enemy's destruction.

Hearing the order of Raghava of imperishable exploits, the Plavagas, urging each other on, filled the air with their roaring.

" Let us demolish Lanka with rocks and stones or with our fists alone " was the resolve of the monkey leaders and, under the eyes of the King of the Titans, in order to accomplish Rama's cherished desire, those troops divided themselves into columns and began to scale the heights of Lanka. Hurling themselves on that city with rocks and trees, those golden-hued Plavamgamas of coppery countenance, willing to lay down their lives in

Rama's service, destroyed innumerable battlements, ramparts and arches with blows from trees, rocks and fists and filled the moats and trenches of clear water with sand, stones, grass and logs.

The commanders led their divisions by thousands and hundreds of millions of thousands to attack Lanka and the Plavamgamas tore up the golden arches, broke down the gates, that equalled the peak of Kailasha in height and from the sides and the centre, hurled themselves on the city like great elephants with cries of "Victory to the mighty Rama and the valiant Lakshmana!" "Victory to Sugriva protected by Raghava!" Shouting thus, the monkeys, who were able to change their form at will, roaring, rushed to attack the city.

Virabahu, Subahu, Nala and Panasa, having demolished some of the outposts, reached the foot of the walls and assigned each column to a post of attack. The eastern gate was besieged by the valiant Kumuda surrounded by ten kotis of triumphant monkeys; his lieutenants were Prasabha and the long-armed Panasa, who were at the head of those forces.

At the southern gate was the warrior Shatabali, a monkey of proved valour, who was stationed with twenty kotis to obstruct the exit. Sushena, the father of Tara, full of courage and strength, with a hundred thousand monkeys surrounded the western gate. The northern gate was blockaded by the mighty Rama assisted by Saumitri and Sugriva, the King of the Monkeys.

The colossal Golangula, Gavaksha, of grim aspect and immense energy, supported one of Rama's flanks with a koti of warriors and the valiant Dhumra, scourger of his foes, supported the other flank with a koti of bears of redoubtable fury.

The intrepid Bibishana, attended by his loyal ministers, followed his ally, the heroic Rama, everywhere, whilst Gaja, Gavaksha, Gavaya, Sharabha and Gandhamadana patrolled every side in defence of the simian army.

Meanwhile, his heart filled with rage, the King of the Titans ordered his troops to make a rapid sortie. At this command falling from Ravana's lips, a tremendous clamour arose among the rangers of the night and the sound of kettledrums, their discs white as the moon, on which the titans beat with sticks of gold, broke out on every side, while hundreds and thousands of

trumpets blared forth, blown by the titans with their cheeks extended to the full. With their dark limbs adorned with ornaments and their conches, those rangers of the night resembled clouds bordered with lightning or rows of cranes; and their battalions advanced gaily under Ravana's imperious commands as, at the time of Pralaya, the tumultuous sea overflows.

At that moment from every side, a clamour arose from the army of the monkeys which filled Malaya with its plains, valleys and chasms, and the sound of the trumpets and drums and the leonine roars of those warriors re-echoed over the earth, sky and sea, as also the trumpeting of elephants, the neighing of horses, the clatter of chariot wheels and the thunder of the titans marching.

Thereafter a terrible struggle ensued between the monkeys and the titans as, in former times between Gods and Asuras. With their flaming maces, their spears, harpoons and axes, the titans, demonstrating their native prowess, struck the army of the monkeys and from their side, those gigantic apes attacked their adversaries ferociously with blows from trees, rocks, teeth and nails.

"Victory to King Sugriva!" yelled the monkeys, "May our Sovereign prevail!" shouted the titans and each proclaimed his name, while other demons, standing on the walls, hacked at the monkeys below with hooks and harpoons and they, infuriated, leapt into the air and dragged down those soldiers stationed on the walls by seizing them with their arms, and that conflict between demons and monkeys was appalling and the earth was covered with mud and flesh in that astonishing fight.

CHAPTER 43

The Conflict between the Monkeys and Titans

THOSE high-souled monkey troops fought with terrible ferocity whilst the titans wakened the ten regions as, mounted on steeds with golden trappings or elephants bright as fire or in cars

flashing like the sun, they issued forth clad in marvellous suits of mail, eager to triumph in Ravana's name.

On their side, the mighty army of monkeys, burning for victory, hurled themselves on those demons of formidable exploits and extraordinary duels arose between titans and monkeys who rushed upon each other.

As Tryambaka fought against Andhaka, so did the son of Bali, Angada, fight with Indrajita, who was endowed with immense energy. Prajangha was attacked by the ever indomitable Sampati and the Monkey Hanuman measured his strength with Jambumali. A prey to violent anger, Bibishana, the younger brother of Ravana, entered into a furious combat with the exceedingly impetuous Shatrughna. The valiant Gaja fought with the Titan Tapana and the powerful Nila with Nikumbha. That Indra of Monkeys, Sugriva, attacked Praghasa with violence and the fortunate Lakshmana engaged in combat with Virupaksha. The unapproachable Agniketu with the Titan Rashmiketu, Mitraghna and Yajnakopa unitedly entered into combat with Rama, Vajramushti fought against Mainda and Ashanipratha against Dvivida, those two foremost of monkeys with the greatest of titans. The valiant son of Dharma, Sushena, that great monkey of illustrious name, grappled with Vidyunmalin and, from every side, other monkeys heroically engaged in countless duels with other titans. Then an appalling battle, causing the hair to stand on end, took place between titans and monkeys who were full of prowess and eager to triumph.

From the bodies of those monkeys and rangers of the night, torrents flowed, their hair being the grass, their blood the water bearing away heaps of corpses.

As Shatakratu with his thunderbolt, so Indrajita, with his mace, in fury, struck at Angada but that intrepid destroyer of enemy hosts shattered his chariot, the framework of which being encrusted with gold, and slew his horses and driver. Sampati, wounded by Parjangha with three arrows, struck him over the head with an Ashvakarna Tree; Jambumali, standing in his chariot, full of strength and fury tore open Hanuman's breast in the fight with the force of his driving, but he, who was born of the Wind-god, approaching that car, soon overthrew it with

the palm of his hand. The redoubtable Pratapana, yelling, rushed on Nala, who with his limbs pierced by the pointed shafts of that skilful titan, suddenly scratched out his eyes.

As Praghasa appeared to be consuming the hosts of the King of the Monkeys, Sugriva hastily struck him with a Saptaparna Tree, while Lakshmana, overwhelmed by a hail of missiles by Virupaksha, that titan of ferocious aspect, struck him down with a single blow. Thereafter the indomitable Agniketu, the Titans Rashmiketu, Mitraghna and Yajnakopa sought to consume Rama with their arrows, whereupon he, in fury, with four formidable shafts, resembling tongues of fire, severed the heads of all four in the struggle. Vajramushti, struck by a blow from Mainda's fist in the fight, was overthrown with his chariot, driver and horses, which resembled an aerial car belonging to the Gods; Nikumbha battling against Nila, who was like unto a piece of collyrium, pierced him with his whetted shafts as the sun with its rays pierces a cloud; and, again and again that deft-handed ranger of the night Nikumbha, with a hundred arrows wounded Nila in the fray whereupon that monkey began to laugh and seizing the wheel of his adversary's chariot, he who resembled Vishnu on the battlefield, severed the head of that titan and that of his charioteer.

Dvivida, whose impact was like unto a flash of lightning, struck Samaprabha with a great rock at which the titans stared in amazement and that foremost of monkeys, Dvivida, who fought with blows of trees, was pierced in his turn with arrows resembling lightning and his limbs being lacerated by those shafts, that monkey grew enraged and with a single blow from a Sala Tree struck down the titan, his chariot and his horses.

Thereafter Vidyunmalin repeatedly emitting loud cries, standing in his car, wounded Sushena with gold encrusted arrows and seeing him, that foremost of monkeys suddenly overthrew the chariot with a great rock. Vidyunmalin however, that agile night ranger, sprang down from his car and, mace in hand, stood ready on the field whereupon that lion among monkeys, infuriated, seizing a great rock, rushed at the titan but as he precipitated himself upon him, Vidyunmalin with a deft stroke, wounded him in the belly with his mace. Then the excellent Plavaga, receiving that terrible and unexpected blow dealt by

his opponent, immediately turned and, in a desperate encounter, hurled a rock upon him. Struck by that missile, Vidyunmalin, that prowler of the night, his chest crushed, fell lifeless on the earth. Thus, under the blows of the simian warriors, the heroic titans perished in a series of hand to hand encounters as the Daityas under the blows of the inhabitants of the Celestial Region. Bhallas and other weapons, maces, lances, darts, shattered chariots, war-horses that had been slain, as also elephants from whose temples ichor exuded and the bodies of monkeys and titans, with wheels, axles, yokes and shafts strewed the earth; the carnage was fearful, a veritable jackal's feast. The headless trunks of monkeys and titans lay in heaps everywhere in the midst of that appalling conflict which resembled the war between Gods and Asuras.

In that stubborn engagement, decimated by the foremost of monkeys, the rangers of the night as the day ended, maddened by the smell of blood, in desperation made preparations for the morrow, and those titans, their limbs covered with blood, desired nothing so greatly as that night should fall.

CHAPTER 44

Angada's Exploit

DURING the combat between monkeys and titans, the sun sank below the horizon, giving place to a night of carnage. In their mutual hostility, monkeys and titans, burning for victory, continued to fight in the gathering gloom.

"Art thou a titan?" asked the monkeys—"Art thou a monkey?" questioned the titans and struck at each other in the darkness. "Strike!" "Kill!" "Come hither!" "Why fleest thou?" could be heard in that appalling struggle.

Clad in mail, the titans, their dark hue intensified by the impenetrable gloom, resembled hills covered with woods abounding in phosphorescent herbs and, transported with anger, they bounded forward in order to fall on the Plavamgamas and devour them, but these hurled themselves on the horses with golden plumes and the banners, like unto tongues of fire,

and with indescribable fury tore them down with their sharp claws. Thus did those mighty monkey warriors sow confusion amongst the titans and they clawed the elephants and those mounted upon them and the chariots from which the banners streamed, breaking them to pieces with their teeth.

Full of fury, Lakshmana and Rama, with their arrows resembling venomous snakes pierced the foremost of the titans, both those who were visible and those who were invisible, and the dust rising from the hooves of the horses and the wheels of the chariots filled the ears and eyes of the combatants, whilst rivers of blood flowed in dreadful torrents in that ghastly tumult which caused the hair to stand on end.

Meanwhile the sound of gongs and drums, marvellous to hear, joined to the blare of conches and the rattle of wheels, and a terrible clamour arose of horses neighing mingling with the cries of the wounded. The corpses of great monkeys, spears, maces and the bodies of the titans, who were able to change their form at will, lay in heaps as high as a mountain on the battlefield. And those weapons appeared to be offered up as a profusion of flowers by the earth, which was entirely hidden and rendered impassable by rivers of blood. That fatal night was as calamitous to the monkeys and titans as the night of dissolution wherein no being survives.

Meanwhile the titans, aided by that impenetrable darkness, with great ferocity showered a hail of weapons on Rama and, yelling, advanced upon him in fury like the ocean at the time of the destruction of all creatures. And Rama, in the twinkling of an eye, with six shafts resembling tongues of flame struck down six titans—the indomitable Yajnashatru, Mahaparshwa, Mahodara, Vajradamshtra of colossal stature and the two emissaries, Shuka and Sarana. With his innumerable shafts, Rama thereafter pierced them all in their vital parts, so that under that shower of arrows they fled from the field, barely escaping with their lives. In an instant, that warrior of the great car lit up the cardinal points with his formidable missiles resembling tongues of fire so that every quarter became luminous. All those titans, who dared to challenge Rama, perished like moths in a flame, and those arrows, whose points were of fine gold, flying everywhere, illumined the night as do

the fireflies in autumn. The cries of the titans and the roll of drums increased the horrors of that night beyond imagining and, in that terrible uproar which re-echoed on every side, it seemed as if the Mount Trikuta was emitting confused murmurs from its innumerable caves.

The gigantic Golangulas, black as night, crushed the rangers of the night in their arms in order to devour them and Angada destroyed his foes with savagery in the struggle.

Then Indrajita, after that monkey had slain his steeds and charioteer, overcome with fatigue, made himself invisible and vanished.

For this feat, Bali's son, worthy of being honoured, was lauded by the Gods and Rishis as also by the brothers, Rama and Lakshmana. All beings aware of the prowess of the mighty Indrajita in war, witnessing his discomfiture and, beholding that high-souled one, were elated and, in the height of joy, the monkeys with Sugriva and Bibishana, seeing the enemy's defeat, cried out " Excellent ! Excellent ! "

Meanwhile Indrajita, who had been overcome in the duel with Bali's son of redoubtable deeds, was seized with violent wrath. Rendering himself invisible by virtue of the boon he had received from Brahma, that wicked wretch, who was exhausted by the fight, transported with anger, loosed some sharp arrows bright as lightning on Rama and Lakshmana. On the field of battle, in his rage, he pierced the limbs of those two Raghavas with formidable shafts resembling serpents. Enveloped by illusion, he sought to confuse them in the struggle and, invisible to all beings through his magic arts, that ranger of the night bound those two brothers Rama and Lakshmana with a network of arrows. Then the monkeys beheld the two warriors, those lions among men, enmeshed by the serpentine darts of that furious titan. Not being able to overcome those two princes in his manifest form, the son of the King of the Titans, in his perversity, had recourse to magic in order to make them captive.

CHAPTER 45

Rama and Lakshmana are struck down by Indrajita

ANXIOUS to ascertain what had become of Indrajita, Rama, that illustrious and mighty prince sent out ten monkey leaders in his pursuit; the two sons of Sushena, the monkey, General Nila, Angada the son of Bali, the valiant Sharabha, Dvivida, Hanuman, the exceedingly courageous Sanuprastha, Rishabha and Rishabaskandha.

Those monkeys flung themselves joyfully into the air brandishing huge trunks of trees in order to explore the ten regions, but Ravani[1], by means of his arrows, loosed with force from the most excellent of bows, arrested their impetuous flight and those monkeys of terrific bounds, who were cruelly pierced by those shafts, were unable to discern Indrajita in the darkness, as the sun is obscured when veiled in cloud. With those darts, that lacerated the flesh, the titan transfixed Rama and Lakshmana and remained master of the field and there was no part of Rama or Lakshmana's body that was not pierced by those serpentine shafts so that streams of blood flowed from their gaping wounds, and they appeared like two Kimshuka Trees in flower.

At that instant, his eyes inflamed, Ravana's son, who resembled a mass of collyrium mixed with oil, though still invisible, said to those two brothers :—" When I, making myself invisible, enter into combat, even the Chief of the Gods, Shakra himself, is not able to discern or approach me, how much less you two! O Descendants of Raghu, having imprisoned you in this network of plumed darts, I, yielding myself up to the violence of my wrath, am about to dispatch you to the region of Yama ! "

Thus addressing those virtuous brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, he pierced them afresh with his pointed arrows shouting exultantly.

Resembling a heap of antimony, the swarthy Indrajita, stretching his immense bow, let fly an even thicker shower of

[1] Ravani—Ravana's son, Indrajita.

formidable arrows in the fight. That warrior, who knew how to make his darts pierce Rama and Lakshmana's vital parts, set up a continual shouting and the two princes in the forefront of battle, imprisoned in the net of arrows and darts, in the twinkling of an eye, became incapable of distinguishing anything. Paralysed, pierced in their vital parts, exhausted, those two mighty and courageous archers fell to the earth, they who were her lords! Lying on that heroes' bed, those two warriors, covered with blood, their limbs bristling with arrows, swooned away in their extremity. And there was not a hair's breadth on their bodies from the tips of their fingers to the end of their feet that was not lacerated, pricked and pierced by those irresistible darts and from both those warriors who had been struck down by that ferocious titan, able to change his shape at will, the hot blood gushed forth as water from a spring. And Rama fell first, his vital parts pierced by the shafts of the wrathful Indrajita, who had formerly vanquished Shakra, and Ravana's son riddled Raghava's body with smooth and polished darts as thick as dust clouds. Naracas, Demi-naracas, Bhallas, Anjalis, Vatsadantas, Sinhadantas,[1] and those shafts like unto razors fell on that warrior, who lay on the earth like a hero, allowing his golden bow, which was severed, to sink from his grasp.

Beholding Rama, that lion among men, fall under a hail of arrows, Lakshmana gave up all hope of living and he was overcome by grief on beholding the lotus-eyed Rama, his refuge, who ever delighted in battle, lying on the earth.

The monkeys too, witnessing this, suffered extreme distress and, their eyes full of tears, overcome with despair, emitted mournful cries; and while those two warriors lay unconscious on that heroes' bed, the monkeys surrounded them and, assembling there, with the son of the Wind at their head, remained inconsolable and a prey to despair.

[1] See Glossary of weapons.

CHAPTER 46

The despair of Sugriva and his Army. Bibishana reassures him

MEANWHILE those inhabitants of the woods, surveying the earth and the sky, beheld the brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, covered with arrows and the titan resting, like unto Indra having loosed the rains. Accompanied by Sugriva, Bibishana, lamenting, came to that place in haste, and Nila, Dvivida, Mainda, Sushena, Kumuda, Angada and Hanuman approached, weeping for the sons of Raghu.

Breathing but faintly, bathed in blood, riddled with innumerable darts, motionless, they lay stretched on a bed of arrows sighing like serpents, washed in blood, resembling two golden standards, and those warriors, lying on a hero's couch, were surrounded by monkey leaders whose eyes were suffused with tears.

Beholding the two Raghavas pierced with darts, a profound emotion stirred those monkeys, who were accompanied by Bibishana, and they surveyed the four quarters without being able to discover Ravani, who had veiled himself in his magic during the fight. But while he was hidden by his occult power, Bibishana, also having recourse to magic arts, looking round, beheld his nephew of incomparable exploits, who was invincible in battle, standing nearby. Although that warrior, who had no peer in the field, had made himself invisible by virtue of the boon he had received, he was recognized by Bibishana, who was full of energy, glory and prowess.

Indrajita, however, contemplating his own feat, gazed on those two warriors stretched on the earth and, in an excess of joy, wishing to share it with all the titans, said :—

"Those two mighty brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, the slayers of Khara and Dushana, are now struck down by my darts ! Even were they aided by the Gods and Asuras with the

hosts of Rishis, they would never be able to release themselves from those arrows that paralyse them! I have overcome Rama for the sake of my sire, who is a prey to anxiety and fear, passing the three watches of the night without allowing his limbs to rest on his couch. I have subdued that wretch, who destroys all beings to their very root, on account of whom the whole of Lanka is agitated like a river in the rainy season. As clouds are dispersed in the autumn, so have the exploits of Rama and Lakshmana and all the inhabitants of the woods been rendered void."

Having spoken thus to all the titans, who had witnessed the scene, Ravani began to assail all the monkey leaders. First he struck down Nila with nine exceedingly powerful javelins, thereafter he wounded Mainda and Dvivida with three more and that mighty bowman, having pierced Jambavan in the breast with an arrow, loosed ten shafts on the impetuous Hanuman. Then Ravani, in the fight, full of ire, with twin arrows pierced Gavaksha and Sharabha, those two of immeasurable prowess, and the leader of the Golangulas and the son of Bali, Angada, were overcome by innumerable darts by the swift-coursing Ravani. Transfixing the leading monkeys with shafts resembling tongues of fire, that mighty and colossal son of Ravana began to shout in triumph and, having overwhelmed and routed the monkeys with a hail of weapons, that long-armed hero burst into loud laughter, exclaining :—

"Behold, O Titans, with a formidable net I have bound those two brothers in the presence of their forces!"

Thus did he speak and all those titans, versed in magic, were exceedingly delighted by his exploit and cheered him unanimously with a roar like unto thunder, crying :— "Rama is dead!" and hearing these tidings and beholding the two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, lying on the earth without breath or movement, they all paid homage to Ravana's son, reflecting "They are slain!" In a transport of joy, Indrajita, victorious in conflict, returned to Lanka spreading happiness among the Nairritas.

A great fear however had taken possession of Sugriva, who was overcome with terror on beholding Rama and Lakshmana riddled with arrows and pierced in every limb and bone,

whereupon Bibishana said to the King of the Monkeys, who was afflicted, his face bathed in tears, his eyes wild with terror :—

"Have no fear, O Sugriva, stay this rain of tears ; these are the fortunes of war ; the titan's victory is not assured ; fate may still smile upon us, O Warrior. These two heroes, full of prowess will recover from their swoon. Take courage and inspire me with courage also, who am bereft of a protector, O Monkey ! Death cannot strike terror in those who find their felicity in truth and justice."

Thus speaking, Bibishana, dipping his hand in water, washed Sugriva's beautiful eyes and, after taking water and uttering a sacred formula, the virtuous Bibishana then dried the face of that intelligent King of the Monkeys and addressing him in words full of good sense and comfort, said :—

"This is not the moment, O Greatest of Monkey Kings, to manifest agitation, excessive emotion in such a situation leads to death, therefore abandon this faint-heartedness that will prove thine undoing and consider how thou canst best serve the troops. Keep watch over Rama so long as he has not regained consciousness, for when they come to themselves, the two Kakutsthas will remove all fear from us. This is nothing to Rama nor is he dying, and Lakshmi[1], who is inaccessible to those who are doomed, has not abandoned him. Therefore pluck up thy courage and call on thy prowess while I seek to inspire the ranks with renewed confidence. Those monkeys, their eyes dilated, trembling and discouraged by the rumours whispered from ear to ear, on seeing me cheerfully going about amongst the ranks of the army, will abandon their fears like a discarded garland, O King of the Monkeys ! "

Having reassured Sugriva, that Indra among the Titans, Bibishana, passed through the monkey lines reviving their confidence.

Meanwhile Indrajita, that great magician, surrounded by all his forces re-entered the City of Lanka and sought out his sire. Approaching Ravana, with joined palms, he imparted the pleasant tidings to him, saying :—

"Rama and Lakshmana are slain ! " Then Ravana joyfully springing up in the midst of the titans, on hearing that his two

[1] Goddess of prosperity.

enemies had succumbed, smelt the head of his son and in great delight questioned him concerning the matter.

Being interrogated by his sire regarding what had taken place, Indrajita related how the two brothers, bound by his shafts, were lying without strength or movement. On hearing those tidings from that warrior of the great car, joy flooded Ravana's inmost being and Dashagriva, banishing his fears regarding the son of Dasaratha, warmly felicitated his offspring who stood beside him.

CHAPTER 47

Sita sees Rama and Lakshmana lying on the Battlefield

THE son of Ravana having returned to Lanka, his purpose accomplished, the leading monkeys surrounded Raghava in order to watch over him, and Hanuman, Angada, Nila, Sushena, Kumuda, Nala, Gaja, Gavaksha, Panasa, Sanuprastha and the mighty Jambavan with Sunda, Rambha, Shatabali and Prithu, having re-organized their ranks, alert, armed with trees surveyed the quarters of the sky up and down and on every side and, even if a grass stirred, they exclaimed " It is a titan ! "

Ravana, meanwhile, full of joy dismissed his son Indrajita and thereafter summoned the female titans who guarded Sita and they with Trijata, having hastened there at his command, were addressed by that monarch in his delight who said to them :—

" Inform Vaidehi that Indrajita has slain Rama and Lakshmana ! Compel her to enter the Pushpaka Plane and show them to her lying on the field of battle ! Her consort, the One depending on whom rendered her so proud that she refused to be united with me, lies there struck down with his brother in the presence of his army ! From now on, free from anxiety, grief and expectation of re-union, Maithili, adorned in all her jewels, will submit herself to me. To-day, beholding Rama with Lakshmana fallen under the sway of death on the battlefield, seeing no other haven and hoping for nought else, the large-eyed Sita will voluntarily seek refuge with me ! "

At these words of that wicked monarch, they all replied—"Be it so!" and went to where the Pushpaka Chariot was, thereafter ascending it. Taking that aerial car, the female titans, in obedience to Ravana's behests, rejoined Maithili in the Ashoka Grove.

There they found her overcome with the grief that separation from her lord caused her, nevertheless they placed her in the Chariot Pushpaka and when they were seated therein with Trijata, Ravana took her round the city garlanded with flags and banners and at the same time the delighted Monarch of the Titans caused a proclamation to be made in Lanka announcing that Rama as also Lakshmana had been slain by Indrajita in combat.

Sita, transported with Trijata in that car, beheld the monkey troops who had been slain and witnessed the joy exhibited by those eaters of flesh and the monkeys afflicted with grief standing round Rama and Lakshmana. And she beheld those two warriors also, lying pierced with arrows, unconscious, riddled with weapons, their armour shattered, their bows broken, transfixed by darts. Those two brothers, who were filled with valour, the foremost of heroes were lying stretched on the earth resembling two youthful sons of Pavaka.

And when the unfortunate Maithili beheld those two intrepid lions among men, pierced with spears, she broke into piteous lamentations, and the dark-eyed Sita, the daughter of Janaka, of faultless limbs, beholding her lord and Lakshmana lying on the earth, burst into sobs. Exhausted with weeping and grief on seeing those two brothers resembling the offspring of the Gods and, believing them to be dead, overwhelmed with affliction, she spoke thus:—

CHAPTER 48

Sita's Lamentations

SEEING her lord lying on the earth as also the valiant Lakshmana, Sita, in the grief that overwhelmed her, gave voice to her complaint, saying:—

"The soothsayers, reading the lineaments of my body, prophesized thus:—

'Thou shalt bear sons and never be widowed!'—now that Rama has been slain, their words have proved to be untrue! Since Rama is slain, those who predicted that I should be the companion and consort of the performer of great sacrifices, have uttered a falsehood! Now that Rama has been slain, those soothsayers, who told me I should be highly honoured by the wives of warriors and kings, are proved not to have spoken truly! Now that Rama has been slain, the astrologers among the brahmins, who openly foretold happiness for me, are proved to have spoken falsely!

"Yet I bear the marks of the lotus on my feet by which high-born women receive the supreme consecration with their lords at their coronation nor do I find in myself any marks of ill-fortune which betoken widowhood in those who are ill-starred, yet all the auspicious signs appear to be rendered void for me! These marks of the lotus, said to be of good augury by the Pundits, have no meaning for me, now that Rama is slain!

"My locks are fine, of even length and dark, my eyebrows meet, my legs are round and smooth, my teeth evenly separated, the corners of my eyes are shaped like the conch, my breasts, hands, feet and thighs well proportioned, my nails smooth and polished, my fingers well-shaped, my breasts touch each other and have depressed nipples, my navel too is deeply indented, my bosom well-formed, my complexion has the sheen of a pearl, the down on my skin is soft. It is said I possess the twelve auspicious signs: my feet and hands are without hollows and marked with the barley corn[1] and my smile is langorous. Thus did those, who interpret the marks of youthful maidens, speak of me.

"Having purified Janasthana[2], received the tidings of my fate and crossed the impassable ocean, those two brothers have perished in the imprint of a cow's hoof. Did they not recollect (that they possessed) the arrows of Varuna, Agni, Indra and Vayu, as also the Brahmashira weapon?

[1] A natural line crossing the thumb at the second joint resembling a barley corn, which is considered auspicious.

[2] Purified Janasthana—that is—' Rid Janasthana of the titans '.

"By means of magic arts, an invisible foe has slain those two, Rama and Lakshmana, my protectors, who are equal to Vasava in combat and I am now bereft of any support. Nay, if he had come into Rama's presence, he would not have returned alive even were he possessed of the swiftness of thought but since Rama and his brother are lying struck down on the battlefield, there is no burden too heavy for death to shoulder! Fate is inexorable. I do not weep so much for Rama and Lakshmana or for myself or my mother but for my unfortunate mother-in-law, Kaushalya, who dwells constantly on her son's return after fulfilling his vows, she who asks herself, 'When shall I behold Lakshmana and Sita with Raghava once more?'"

Thus did Janaki lament and Trijata said to her:—"Do not despair, O Goddess, thy lord lives! I will tell thee what powerful considerations have convinced me that those two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana still live, O Queen. They are, that resolution and martial ardour do not animate the faces of soldiers who have lost their leader, neither would the celestial car, Pushpaka, have brought thee hither, O Vaidehi, if those two heroes had succumbed. An army that sees its valiant commander fall is bereft of courage and wanders aimlessly about on the battlefield like a ship which has lost its rudder. Yet there is neither confusion nor disorder among the intrepid forces that mount guard over the two Kakutsthas. I am pointing this out to thee on account of mine affection for thee. These auspicious omens should re-assure thee fully, for know well, the two Kakutsthas are not dead, I hasten to tell thee this out of love for thee.

"I have never spoken what is not true to thee nor shall I ever do so, O Maithili, for by thy conduct and natural gaiety thou hast found a place in my heart! Nay, those two warriors are not able to be vanquished even by the Gods and Asuras with their leaders. This is what I have observed and communicate to thee. Yea, there is a great marvel to be seen, O Maithili; behold how, fallen under those shafts and deprived of their senses, their beauty has not deserted them.

"In the natural course, when men have lost their lives, their features exhibit appalling alteration, it is therefore impossible that these two do not still live. Banish thy grief on account of

Rama and Lakshmana, abandon thy sorrow, O Daughter of Janaka ! "

At these words, Sita, who resembled a daughter of the Gods, with joined palms, exclaimed " May it be so ! "

Meanwhile the Chariot Pushpaka, swift as the wind, had returned and the plaintive Sita re-entered the city with Trijata, whereupon descending from the car, she entered the Ashoka Grove with the female titans.

Having returned to the royal enclosure planted with innumerable trees, Sita, recalling the two princes whom she had just seen, became a prey to extreme grief.

CHAPTER 49

Rama returns to consciousness and weeps over Lakshmana

BOUND by those formidable weapons, the two sons of Dasaratha, breathing like serpents, lay bleeding on the earth.

Those foremost of monkeys, the valiant companions of Sugriva, plunged in grief, were all standing round the two illustrious warriors.

Then the mighty Raghava, by virtue of his hardihood and native strength, awoke from his swoon despite the shafts that held him captive. Beholding his brother bleeding, unconscious, tightly bound and his features changed, Rama, full of grief, lamented thus :—" Of what use to me is the recovery of Sita or even life itself, since my brother, now lying before mine eyes, has been struck down in the fight ? It were possible for me to find a consort equal to Sita in this world of mortals but not a brother, friend and comrade in arms such as Lakshmana ! If he has returned to the five elements, he, the increaser of Sumitra's joy, I will yield up my life breaths in the presence of the monkeys !

" What shall I say to my mother, Kaushalya, or to Kaikeyi ? If I return without Lakshmana, how shall I console Sumitra trembling and crying out like an osprey, who sighs for her son's return from whom she has been separated so long ? What

answer shall I give to Shatrughna and the illustrious Bharata when I return without the one who followed me to the forest? Nay, I should not be able to endure Sumitra's reproaches; I will leave my body here; I am unable to continue living. Woe unto me and to my lack of nobility, since, through my fault, Lakshmana has fallen and lies on a bed of arrows as one who has yielded up his life!

"O Lakshmana, thou didst ever console me in my great misfortune; now that thou art slain, thou wilt no longer be able to allay my sufferings by thy words. Thou, who, in this battle, struck down innumerable titans, art fallen, pierced by darts, like a hero on the selfsame field. Lying on a bed of arrows, bathed in blood, thou art nought but a heap of weapons! It appears as if the sun has set behind the Astachala Mountains! Pierced with spears, thy limbs express thine agony without the aid of words. I shall follow that illustrious warrior to the region of Yama, as he accompanied me when I retired to the forest; he, who ever loved his own and was filled with devotion for me, lies in the state to which my misdeeds have brought him, wretch that I am!

"Even when deeply provoked, that valiant hero never uttered an unpleasant or harsh word; he who was able to loose five hundred arrows in one shot and who excelled Kartavirya himself in the science of archery; Lakshmana, who was accustomed to a rich couch and who, with his arrows could sever those of the mighty Shakra, is lying slain on the earth.

"Those vain words, which I uttered, will undoubtedly consume me since I have not enthroned Bibishana as King of the Titans! Return at once, O Sugriva, since bereft of my support thou and thy leaders will be overcome by Ravana. Recross the sea accompanied by thine army led by Angada with Nila and Nala, O King. I am fully satisfied by the great military exploit of Hanuman, impossible to any other and by that accomplished by the King of the Bears and the General of the Golangulas. That which Angada, Mainda and Dvivida did, the terrible combat that Kesarin and Sampati sustained, the formidable struggle in which Gavaya, Gavaksha, Sharabha, Gaja and other monkeys, who are willing to sacrifice their lives for me, took part, are sufficient for me. Nay, it is not possible

for mortals to avoid their destiny. O Sugriva, fearing to fail in thy duty, thou hast done all that a friend and comrade could do; all that is due to friendship, thou hast accomplished, O Foremost of Monkeys! I take leave of you all; go where it seems best to you!"

Hearing Rama lament thus, the monkeys allowed tears to fall from their reddened eyes, when, at that moment, Bibishana, having established order in the ranks, mace in hand hurried to rejoin Raghava. Seeing him, who resembled a mass of collyrium, hastening towards them thus, the monkeys thinking him to be Ravani, fled away.

CHAPTER 50

Garuda liberates Rama and Lakshmana

MEANWHILE the illustrious and powerful King of the Monkeys enquired saying:—"What does this stampede signify? The army resembles a ship amidst the waves struck by a tempest!"

Hearing Sugriva's speech, Angada, the son of Bali, answered:

"Dost thou not see Rama and Lakshmana of the Great Car, those two valiant and illustrious sons of Dasaratha, covered with darts lying all bloody on a bed of arrows?"

Thereupon that Indra among monkeys, Sugriva, said to his son:—"To my mind there is some other cause why the monkeys, bewildered, their eyes distended with terror, are throwing down their arms in order to flee in all directions without shame and without looking behind them, jostling each other and leaping over those who have fallen!"

In the midst of this turmoil, the warrior Bibishana came there, a great mace in his hand and said "Victory to Rama! Victory to Rama!" and Sugriva observed that it was this titan who had caused the panic among the monkeys whereat he addressed the illustrious King of the Bears, who stood near, and said:—

"It is Bibishana who has come hither! On seeing him the monkeys, seized with terror, have fled, deeming him to be

Ravana's son; do thou rally those fugitives immediately, who, in fear, have scattered in all directions and inform them that it is Bibishana who has come!"

In obedience to Sugriva's command, Jambavan perceiving it to be Bibishana and recognizing his voice, re-assured the monkeys and arrested the stampede, whereupon freed from anxiety they all retraced their steps.

Meanwhile the faithful Bibishana, on beholding Rama's body as also Lakshmana's covered with arrows, was overcome with distress in his turn. Dipping his hand in water, he washed their eyes, but, anguish seizing his heart, he began to weep and lament, saying:—

"Behold to what a pass these two powerful and valiant warriors have been brought by that titan with his crafty ways! The son of my brother, that wicked youth of perverse soul, in his demoniacal cunning, has deceived those two honourable fighters. Pierced by arrows, covered with blood, they are lying on the earth like two porcupines. Those two gallant beings, those two lions among men, on whom depended the position to which I aspired, to my destruction are lying here insensible. I am as one dead and, deprived of the hope of becoming king am lost, whilst my rival Ravana sees his vow fulfilled and his desires realised!"

Thus did Bibishana lament, whereupon Sugriva embraced him and that magnanimous King of the Monkeys spoke to him in this wise:—

"O Virtuous Prince, thou shalt certainly reign over Lanka; Ravana and his son will not achieve their purpose; the injury done to Rama and Lakshmana is not grave, they will both emerge from their swoon and destroy Ravana and his hordes in battle."

When he had thus consoled and comforted the titan, Sugriva issued his commands to Sushena, his stepfather, who stood before him, saying:—

"Take these two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana with the foremost of the monkey divisions to Kishkindha, till these two scourgers of their foes have recovered consciousness. As for me, I shall slay Ravana with his son and his relatives and bring back Maithili as did Shakra the prosperity he had lost."

Thus did that King of the Monkeys speak and Sushena answered him saying :—

" Formerly a great war took place between the Devas and Asuras and, by making themselves invisible again and again, the Danavas overcame the Gods despite their skill in bearing arms. Experienced warriors though they were, wounded, unconscious and almost deprived of life, yet Brihaspati revived them by the aid of remedies accompanied by the recitation of sacred formulas.

" Let the monkeys, Sampati, Panasa and others go in haste to gather those simples by the ocean of milk; undoubtedly those monkeys are conversant with the two mountain herbs, the celestial Samjivakarana and Vishalya, which were created by a God. From the bosom of the milky ocean rise the Mountains Chandra and Drona, where the divine ' Amrita ' emerged after the churning,[1] it is there that these miraculous herbs are to be found. Let the Son of the Wind, Hanuman go to those two mountains placed in that vast sea by the Gods."

As he was speaking, a great wind arose accompanied by massed clouds and lightning, whipping up the salty waves and causing the mountains to tremble as from an earthquake. Under the mighty stroke of Vata's wing the great trees fell headlong into the briny waters of the sea, their branches broken, whilst terror seized the great snakes who inhabited these regions and those monsters plunged into the depths.

Suddenly Garuda, the valiant son of Vinata like unto a blazing torch appeared to all those monkeys and, on beholding him, the serpents who bound those two warriors in the form of mighty arrows, fled away. Thereafter Suparna, touching the two Kakutsthas and offering them his good wishes, with his hands wiped their faces that shone like the moon.

Under Vainateya's touch, the wounds of both were closed and their bodies immediately assumed a brilliant and glowing hue. Their valour, vigour, strength, endurance and resolution, those great qualities, also perspicacity, intelligence and memory were redoubled.

Having raised up those equals of Vasava, the exceedingly valiant Garuda embraced them warmly and Rama said to him :—

[1] Referring to the churning of the Ocean by Gods and Asuras.

"Thanks to thy beneficence and grace we have both been delivered from the strange evil that Ravana brought upon us and our strength has returned. As in the presence of my father Dasaratha, or my grandfather Aja, in thy presence also my heart is filled with felicity. Who art thou endowed with a beauty which distinguishes thee, thou bearing crowns, divine perfumes and celestial ornaments, the raiment which clothes thee being free from dust?"

Then the extremely illustrious Vainateya, who was full of valour and the Lord of Winged Creatures, his heart enraptured, addressed Rama, whose eyes sparkled with delight, and said :—

"I am thy dear friend, O Kakutstha, thy very breath, Garuda, who have come hither to assist you both. The mighty Asuras and exceedingly energetic monkeys as also the Gandharvas with Shatakratu at their head or the Gods themselves would not have been able to sever these formidable bonds wrought with arrows, woven with the aid of great magic by Indrajita of ruthless deeds. These offspring of Kadru of sharp fangs and subtle poison, which the potent arts of the titan had changed to arrows, had fettered thee. Fortunate art thou, O Virtuous Rama, thou true hero, as also Lakshmana, thy brother, the destroyer of his foes in combat.

Hearing of thy plight, summoning up mine energy in affection for you both, giving ear to the call of friendship alone, I came hither with all speed. Now that you are liberated from these formidable bonds let both of you be constantly on your guard! All titans by nature have recourse to treachery in war, whilst for you, O Chivalrous Warriors, honour is your only weapon. Never trust the titans on the battlefield for such perfidious means are ever employed by them."

Having counselled him in this wise, the mighty Suparna embraced Rama tenderly and craved his permission to depart, saying :—

"Dear and Virtuous Raghava, thou art a friend to thy foes, allow me to take my leave. Do not enquire indiscreetly into the cause of my friendship, O Raghava, who am as near to thee as thy breath, though external to thee. Thou shalt know of it when thou hast achieved success in battle, O Hero! When, under the rain of thy missiles, Lanka has been destroyed save for the aged

and the children and thou hast slain Ravana, thine adversary, thou shalt bring back Sita ! "

Having said this, Suparna of swift flight, who had just healed Rama's wounds in the presence of the monkeys, having paid obeisance to him and taken him into his arms, mounted into the sky with the speed of the wind.

Seeing the two Raghavas healed of their wounds, the leaders of the monkeys, lashing their tails, roared like lions. Thereafter gongs were beaten and drums resounded, whilst conches were blown amidst general rejoicing. Some manifested their strength by breaking down the trees which they used as maces and, in their warlike frenzy, those Plavamgamas hurled themselves on the gates of Lanka.

Thereafter a terrible and appalling clamour arose amongst the foremost of monkeys as, at the end of summer, the roaring of thunderclouds in the night.

CHAPTER 51

Dhumraksha goes out to fight the Monkeys

THAT formidable clamour, set up by the monkeys who were full of martial ardour, arrested the attention of Ravana and his titans, and he, hearing the joyful and spirited acclamations and the distant tumult, said to his ministers who surrounded him :—

" A great uproar, resembling the muttering of clouds, has arisen from that horde of delighted monkeys. Undoubtedly their joy is great, their mighty shouts are agitating the ocean itself. Nevertheless whetted shafts have rendered the two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, insensible, therefore this tremendous outcry almost alarms me ! "

Having spoken thus to his ministers, the Lord of the Titans said to his Nairritas, who stood round him :—

" Do ye speedily discover from what cause this general rejoicing among those forest dwellers proceeds in their present painful situation ! "

At this command, the titans hastily climbed the ramparts

from where they beheld the army and its leader the illustrious Sugriva with the two Raghavas also, freed of their bonds, seated in noble ease, whereupon the titans were thunderstruck. With terror in their hearts, those fierce warriors jumped down from the walls and, deadly pale, returned to their king. With downcast mien, those titans, skilled in speech, faithfully informed Ravana of those unpleasant tidings, saying :—

"The two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, whom Indrajita had bound with his benumbing shafts and whose arms he had pinioned, are freed from the arrows which paralysed them and now appear on the field of battle in their native vigour, resembling two elephants who have snapped their fetters."

At these words, the powerful King of the Titans, full of anxiety and highly incensed, grew pale and said :—

"If mine adversaries, having thus been bound, are now free despite those formidable arrows, those rare boons resembling serpents bright as the sun, that were infallible and with which Indrajita secured them after overcoming them in combat, then mine entire authority is in jeopardy ! Verily those darts, bright as fire, which in battle deprived mine enemies of life have been rendered void."

Having uttered these words in furious tones, hissing like a snake, he addressed one named Dhumraksha who was seated amidst the titans and said :—

"Taking with thee a considerable force of titans go without delay and slay Rama and Lakshmana."

At the command of that crafty monarch, Dhumraksha circumambulated him and immediately left the palace, thereafter having crossed the threshold he said to the General of the Forces:

"Mobilize the army, what need is there for delay when the battle is joined ! "

Thus spoke Dhumraksha and the General gathered together a large number of troops in accord with Ravana's command.

Thereafter those prowlers of the night, who were valiant and of a formidable aspect, with girdles of bells round their waists, shouted exultantly and ranged themselves round Dhumraksha.

Furnished with every kind of weapon, brandishing spears, hammers, maces, harpoons, sticks, iron cudgels, bars, hooks,

picks, nooses and axes, those terrible titans sallied forth with the noise of thunder. Clad in mail and mounted on chariots that were magnificently dressed with flags and decorated with bands of pure gold, harnessed to mules of many heads or steeds of exceeding fleetness or elephants maddened with Mada juice, some of those titans bounded forward like veritable tigers.

And Dhumraksha, with a great clatter set out in a celestial car to which mules with golden harness and the heads of deer and lions were hitched; and that valiant general surrounded by the titans set forth amidst mocking laughter through the western gate, where Hanuman was stationed. As he advanced in his excellent car harnessed to mules, whose voices he emulated, birds of ill-omen planed above him and on the top of his chariot a terrible vulture alighted while those devourers of corpses clustered on the point of his standard. Streaming with blood a huge decapitated and livid trunk fell to earth emitting inarticulate cries at Dhumraksha's approach and the sky rained down blood, the earth shook, the wind blew adversely with the roar of thunder and darkness obscured every quarter.

Beholding those terrible portents that appeared in all their horror, boding ill-fortune to the titans, Dhumraksha was filled with alarm, and terror seized all the soldiers who accompanied him. At the moment when, full of fear, amidst his countless titans, eager to enter into combat, that valiant general set out, he beheld the vast army of the monkeys resembling a great flood, protected by the arms of the Raghavas.

CHAPTER 52

Dhumraksha fights and is slain by Hanuman

SEEING Dhumraksha of redoubtable courage set forth, all the monkeys in their martial ardour emitted loud cries and a terrific struggle ensued between those forest dwellers and the titans, who attacked each other with huge trees, spears and maces.

On all sides ferocious monkeys were massacred by titans and titans felled to the earth by monkeys employing trees. The

titans struck their opponents with pointed arrows furnished with heron's plumes, fearful to behold, which never missed their target and terrible maces, harpoons, axes, formidable bars and tridents of all kinds, which, brandished by them, mutilated those powerful monkeys, while they, exasperated, redoubled their efforts and, without flagging, continued the fight. Their limbs pierced with arrows, their bodies transfixed with spears, those foremost of the monkeys armed themselves with trees and rocks and, with terrific bounds, having proclaimed their names to the accompaniment of yells, crushed those intrepid titans.

Thereafter the battle waxed exceedingly furious between monkeys and demons and the former amidst shouts of triumph seized hold of stones of every kind and trees with countless branches and rocks in order to destroy the enemy; the titans, who fed on gore, fell in heaps, vomiting blood, their sides slashed open by the trees, whilst others were crushed by the stones and yet others torn to pieces by the monkeys' teeth.

Their standards broken, their swords snapped, their chariots overturned, they wandered about blindly and the earth was covered with the corpses of great elephants resembling hills and horses with their riders crushed by the great rocks hurled on them by those dwellers in the woods; and the monkeys of exceeding valour rushed on the titans, flinging themselves upon them with great bounds and scratching their faces with their sharp nails.

Mutilated, their hair torn out, maddened by the smell of blood, the titans fell in great numbers; some of those fierce warriors however, in a paroxysm of fury hurled themselves on the monkeys and struck them with the palms of their hands, which resounded like the clap of thunder, and the monkeys, receiving that sharp shock, with an even greater ferocity crushed the titans with blows of their feet, teeth and trees.

Seeing his army routed, Dhumraksha, that lion among the titans, in his rage, began to create carnage among those bellicose apes and some pierced with spears lost rivers of blood whilst others, struck down by the blows of the axe, fell to earth.

Here some were crushed by iron bars, others torn by harpoons or pierced by javelins, stumbled and fell, yielding up their vital

breaths. Mowed down, covered with blood, put to flight, those inhabitants of the woods fell dying under the furious onslaught of the titans in the struggle. Their breasts torn open they lay on their side or, slashed with tridents, their entrails gushed forth.

Then that mighty conflict took on fearful proportions by virtue of the number of monkeys and titans who took part and the innumerable darts, stones and trees that were used. With the bowstrings as the tuneful lute, the neighing of the horses, the clapping of the hands and the trumpeting of the elephants as the melody, the whole battle resembled a symphony.

Meanwhile Dhumraksha, armed with his bow, in the forefront of battle, under a hail of missiles, dispersed the monkeys as in sport on every side, and Maruti, beholding the monkey army being exterminated and put to flight by that titan, hurled himself upon him in fury, a great rock in his hand. His eyes inflamed with anger, the equal of his sire in courage, he flung the rock on the chariot of his foe and seeing the stone fall, Dhumraksha, brandishing his mace, in his agitation leapt quickly from the car to the ground. Then that rock rolled on the earth, having shattered the chariot with its wheels, its pole, its shafts, banner and Dhumraksha's bow.

Thereafter Hanuman, born of Maruta, leaving the car lying, slew the titans with the trunks of trees furnished with their branches, and their heads crushed, covered with blood, mangled by those trees, they fell to the earth.

Having routed the army of the enemy, Hanuman, born of Maruta, breaking off the peak of a mountain hurled himself on Dhumraksha, who, brandishing his mace, rushed on his adversary and he advanced with haste towards him shouting. Then Dhumraksha, in his rage, brought down that weapon studded with countless points on the head of the infuriated Hanuman and assailed by that violent and fearful stroke, the monkey, who was endowed with the strength of Maruta, was in no wise disturbed but struck the titan full on the skull with his rocky peak which shattered all his limbs, whereupon Dhumraksha suddenly fell to the earth like a mountain crumbling.

Beholding him slain, the night-rangers who had survived the

slaughter, terrified, re-entered Lanka, harassed by the Plavamgamas.

The illustrious son of Pavana, however, having destroyed his enemies, causing rivers of blood to flow, weary of slaughter, with delight received the cordial felicitations of the monkey leaders.

CHAPTER 53

Vajradamshtra enters the Lists

HEARING of the death of Dhumraksha, Ravana the King of the Titans fell into a transport of fury and began to hiss like a serpent. Wrought up with ire, with long and burning sighs he addressed the exceedingly powerful Vajradamshtra, saying :—

" O Warrior, go forth at the head of the titans and triumph over the son of Dasaratha, Rama, as also over Sugriva and the monkeys ! "

" Be it so ! " answered the general who was versed in the art of magic, and he departed speedily with the innumerable divisions that surrounded him.

With the utmost care he assembled teams of elephants, horses, donkeys and mules, adorning them with countless flags of different colours, and that titan, wearing bracelets and a diadem of great price, set out immediately, bearing his bow and, having circumambulated his chariot dressed with pennants, which dazzled the gaze with its facings of pure gold, he ascended it.

Thereafter infantry of every kind issued forth, furnished with weapons, such as cutlasses, innumerable darts, gleaming maces, harpoons, bows, lances, spears, swords, discus, hammers and sharp axes. All those illustrious lions among the titans in their resplendent and many-coloured uniforms, full of ardour mounted on elephants intoxicated with ichor, resembled moving hills. Their mounts equipped for combat, driven by mahouts bearing lances and goads, were headed by those distinguished for their trappings and great strength.

And the whole army of titans filed out, looking as brilliant as the clouds riven by lightning in the rainy season and they

emerged from the northern gate where the General Angada was stationed.

Thereafter, as they set forth, fearful portents appeared and, from a cloudless yet burning sky, meteors fell while jackals, emitting fearful howls, belched forth flames and fire. Hideous beasts foretold the destruction of the titans who entered into the combat stumbling miserably.

Yet despite those ill-omens, the mighty Vajradamshtra, full of energy and prowess, went forward eager to meet the foe and, seeing their adversaries advancing, the monkeys, burning for victory, set up tremendous shouts which echoed in every quarter.

Thereafter a furious struggle ensued between the monkeys and the titans and those redoubtable warriors of ferocious aspect sought to bring about each other's destruction. Some of those warriors, their heads and bodies severed, fell to the earth bathed in blood, whilst others, whose arms resembled steel, approached one another, attacking with various weapons, neither giving ground. Trees, stones and javelins clashed with a tremendous noise, striking terror in the heart of the listeners and the appalling clatter of chariot wheels, the twanging of bow-strings, the blare of trumpets, the roll of drums, the booming of gongs, created an indescribable uproar.

Then, throwing away their weapons, they wrestled with one another in hand-to-hand combat, striking each other with the palms of their hands, their feet, their knees and even with trees. Some of the titans had their bodies torn open, some were crushed by rocks and some were beaten down by the blows of the monkeys in the fight.

Now Vajradamshtra, having surveyed the scene, began to sow terror among the monkeys, as Antaka, noose in hand, at the destruction of the worlds.

Full of vigour, those skilled warriors, the titans, transported with rage, decimated the monkey forces with every kind of weapon and, on his side the audacious son of Vayu struck down all those titans in the fight, fury re-doubling his strength, so that he appeared like the Fire of Dissolution. Then the valiant Angada, the equal of Shakra in valour, brandishing a tree, his eyes red with anger, like a lion amidst defenceless deer, caused a terrible carnage. By the force of his blows, the titans

of redoubtable courage, their skulls crushed, fell like trees under the blows of the axe and the earth, strewn with chariots of every kind, standards, horses, bodies of monkeys and titans and rivers of blood, was fearful to behold. Strings of pearls, bracelets, raiment, and parasols decorated the battlefield, which glowed like an autumnal night and the tempestuous Angada scattered the great army of the titans as the wind dispels the clouds.

CHAPTER 54

Angada slays Vajradamshtra

The extermination of his army through Angada's prowess filled the valiant Vajradamshtra with fury. Stretching his formidable bow, like unto Shakra's thunderbolt, he assailed the monkey battalions with a hail of shafts whereupon the foremost of the titans mounted on chariots, armed with every kind of weapon and full of courage, entered the lists whilst the monkeys, those powerful bulls among the Plavagas, assembling on all sides, fought with rocks.

Thousands of weapons were hurled in that desperate encounter by the titan and monkey leaders and, from their side, the great monkeys with the ardour of elephants in rut, showered down giant trees and huge lumps of rock on the demons so that between those intrepid warriors, the titans and the monkeys, who never retreated in battle, a tremendous struggle ensued.

Monkeys and titans, still possessing heads but bereft of arms and legs, lay on the earth bathed in blood and bristling with arrows, a prey to herons, vultures and crows or devoured by troops of jackals.

Monkeys and night-rangers fell on the battlefield; headless trunks leapt up to the terror of all, their arms, hands and heads severed and their limbs hacked to pieces in the fight.

Meanwhile the army of Vajradamshtra, overcome by the monkeys, broke up under his eyes, whereupon that leader, seeing the titans terrorised and decimated by the Plavamgamas, his eyes red with anger, bow in hand, penetrated the enemy ranks,

sowing panic amongst them. Thereafter he dispatched those monkeys with arrows furnished with heron's plumes that flew straight to their target and pierced seven, eight, nine or five of his opponents simultaneously, thus destroying them in his fury. Put to flight, those simian battalions, their limbs crippled by those darts, sought refuge with Angada as all creatures with Prajapati; and when he beheld those monkey divisions fleeing in disorder, the son of Bali exchanged glances of hatred with Vajradamshtra and, in a paroxysm of rage, they entered into a terrible duel one with the other so that it seemed a lion and an elephant intoxicated with ichor fought together. And the son of Bali full of valour, was struck in his vital parts by a hundred thousand arrows resembling tongues of fire and all his limbs were besprinkled with blood. Then that exceedingly energetic monkey of redoubtable courage hurled a tree at Vajradamshtra but that intrepid titan, seeing it fall, cut it into innumerable pieces which fell in heaps on the earth.

Witnessing the strength of his rival, that lion among the Plavagas seized hold of a huge rock which he spun round, emitting a shout and, as it descended, that hero leaping down from his chariot, armed with his mace, stood waiting unperturbed. Meanwhile that rock discharged by Angada fell on the forefront of the battle where it shattered the chariot with its wheels, shafts and horses.

Then the monkey broke off a great crag from the mountain once more and it was covered with trees and he brought it down on the head of his adversary so that Vajradamshtra, seized with a sudden giddiness, faltered and began to vomit blood, clenching his mace convulsively and breathing heavily. Thereafter, coming to his senses, in a transport of fury he hit the son of Bali full on the chest with his mace and, letting it fall, began to fight with his fists whereupon a hand-to-hand struggle ensued between monkey and titan. Exhausted by the blows, spitting blood, those valiant warriors resembled the planets Mars and Mercury.

Meanwhile the exceedingly powerful Angada, that lion of Plavagas stood waiting and he seized hold of a shield covered with the hide of a bull and a great sword decorated with golden bells enveloped in a leathern sheath.

In the midst of innumerable graceful evolutions, the monkey and the titan attacked each other, roaring and thirsting for victory. With their gaping wounds, they shone like two Kimshuka Trees in flower and the struggle robbed them of their breath so that they sank to their knees on the earth. Thereafter in the twinkling of an eye, Angada, that elephant among monkeys, rose up, his eyes inflamed like a serpent that has been struck with a stick and, with his stainless sword that was well sharpened, the son of Bali who was full of vigour, struck off the huge head of Vajradamshtra, whose limbs were bathed in blood. Under the stroke of that sword, his beautiful head fell, cleft in twain, the eyes rolling.

Beholding Vajradamshtra slain, the titans, wild with terror, fled panic-stricken towards Lanka, harassed by the Plavamgamas, their faces woe-begone, their heads bowed in shame.

Having struck down the enemy with his powerful arm, the mighty son of Bali experienced great joy amidst the monkey army, honoured by them for his high courage and he resembled the God of a Thousand Eyes surrounded by the Celestials.

CHAPTER 55

Akampana goes out to fight against the Monkeys

HEARING that Vajradamshtra had been slain by the son of Bali, Ravana addressed the General of his forces who, with joined palms, stood near him and said :—

" Let the invincible titans of irresistible courage go forth immediately with Akampana at their head, who is conversant with the use of every weapon and missile; he excels in vanquishing the foe and in preserving and leading his own forces ; he has ever desired my welfare and loved war ; he will prove victorious over the two Kakutsthas and the exceedingly energetic Sugriva. The rest of the monkeys too are formidable but without doubt he will exterminate them all."

At this command from Ravana, the valiant titan, in great haste, mobilized an entire division of the army. Furnished with every

kind of weapon, those foremost of titans of terrifying aspect, fearful to look upon, rushed into the fray where their general had despatched them.

Akampana of the stature and colour of a cloud, whose voice resembled thunder, ascended his car decorated with fine gold and set out surrounded by dreadful demons. He, who was incapable of trembling in battle even before the Gods themselves, seemed to the monkeys to be as splendid as the sun. As he sped on his way, furious and eager to enter into combat, the horses drawing his chariot were suddenly deprived of their energy and the left eye of that one who delighted in warfare began to twitch. His countenance grew pale, his voice trembled, the day which had seemed so fair became threatening and a bitter wind began to blow. Birds and beasts uttered mournful cries but that titan, who had the shoulders of a lion and the agility of a tiger, disregarding those portents, rushed towards the battlefield and, as he went forward with his troops, an immense tumult arose that seemed to convulse the ocean and the sound appalled the simian army, who, furnished with trees, prepared to enter into combat.

Thereafter a fearful struggle ensued between monkeys and demons and, ready to sacrifice their lives in the cause of Rama and Ravana, those monkey and titan warriors of exceeding valour, who resembled hills, contended with each other and, the yells they emitted in the thick of the fight and the shouts of defiance that they let forth in their rage created an indescribable clamour. A thick coppery dust, raised by the monkeys and the titans enveloped the whole horizon and, in the midst of that yellow cloud resembling silk which covered them, the combatants could no longer distinguish each other on the field. Neither standard, banner, shield, weapon nor chariot could be discerned in that pall of dust and the terrific clamour of warriors challenging and rushing upon each other was appalling to hear, yet in the confusion no form was visible.

In that fight monkeys fell under the blows of enraged monkeys, titans massacred titans in the darkness; Plavagas and demons slew foe and friend, and the earth drenched with gore was thick with mud.

Under the rain of blood the dust was laid, revealing the

earth covered with corpses. Then the monkeys and titans assailed each other with blows from trees, spears, maces, javelins, stones, bars and picks, wrestling with their adversaries who resembled mountains. In that encounter those monkeys slew the titans of dreadful deeds and they, transported with rage, bearing darts and javelins in their hands, destroyed the monkeys with their cruel weapons.

Thereafter Akampana, the leader of the titans, full of ire, consoled all those fierce and valiant soldiers; the monkeys however, leaping upon them, shattered their weapons and crushed those titans with blows from trees and stones.

At that instant, the courageous monkey Leaders, Kumuda, Nala and Mainda, in a paroxysm of rage, as in sport, with mighty bounds and blows of trees created a great carnage amongst the titans and all those lions among the monkeys brought about complete disorder in the enemy ranks with their countless missiles.

CHAPTER 56

Akampana is slain by Hanuman

WITNESSING this great exploit executed by the monkey leaders, Akampana was seized with violent anger and his features became distorted. Brandishing his powerful bow, he addressed his charioteer in these words:—

" Drive the chariot with all speed to that place, for those warriors are slaying countless titans on the battlefield. Those arrogant monkeys of exceeding ferocity, armed with trees and rocks, dare to affront me! I shall exterminate those audacious warriors who are seen sowing confusion in the ranks of the titans! "

Thereupon, in his chariot drawn by fast-moving horses, Akampana, the most skilful of car-warriors, with a hail of darts, overwhelmed the monkeys so that they were no longer able to maintain their formation nor for this reason could they fight

and, crushed under the shafts of the titan, the confusion became general.

Then the valiant Hanuman, seeing them fall under the sway of death, pursued by Akampana's darts, went to the rescue of his companions and, beholding that great Plavaga, those lions among the monkeys rallied and, in the field, grouped themselves boldly round him. Observing his courage, those foremost of the monkeys took heart in the shelter of his valour.

Meanwhile Akampana, like unto a second Mahendra, caused a hail of arrows to descend on Hanuman who remained as firm as a rock, heedless of the weapons that fell upon his body, and that exceedingly courageous monkey resolved to slay his adversary and, with peals of laughter, the impetuous son of Maruta leapt on the titan, causing the earth to shake as it were, while burning with energy he emitted yells, so that it was impossible to look upon him as it is impossible to gaze on a fire in a brazier.

Finding himself without weapons, that foremost one among the monkeys, in the fury that possessed him, tore up a rock and seizing a huge crag with one hand, Maruti, letting forth a roar, began to spin it rapidly thereafter hurling it at the Titan Leader Akampana, as formerly in the encounter, Purandara hurled his thunderbolt at Namuchi.

Akampana, however, seeing that crag flying towards him, shattered it from a distance by means of great crescent-shaped darts. Beholding that rocky peak shattered in the air by the titan's arrows and falling in pieces, Hanuman became mad with anger and observing an Ashvakarna Tree as large as a mountain, in the transport of rage that possessed him, that monkey uprooted it with violence and taking hold of that tree of immense branches, in his great strength, brandished it exultantly. Then he began to run with great strides, breaking down the trees in his haste and, in the excess of his fury, tearing up the earth with his feet; and he struck down elephants as also those who rode upon them and charioteers with their cars and the formidable titan infantry.

Seeing Hanuman, like unto Antaka, the Destroyer of Vital Breaths, full of wrath, armed with a tree, the titans took to flight. Thereupon the valiant Akampana beholding that enraged monkey

sowing terror amongst his soldiers, greatly perturbed, set up a mighty shout and, with fourteen pointed arrows that tore the flesh, he pierced the exceedingly powerful Hanuman.

Riddled with sharp-pointed iron shafts, that simian warrior resembled a mountain covered with forests and, like unto a flowering Ashoka Tree, he shone like a smokeless flame. Uprooting another tree, with a prodigious bound he struck the head of the Titan General a fearful blow and, by that stroke with which that Indra among Monkeys smote him in his fury, Akampana fell dead.

Seeing their leader lying lifeless on the earth, all the titans trembled as trees when the earth quakes. Put to flight, all those warriors, throwing away their arms, escaped in the direction of Lanka, terrified, pursued by the monkeys. Their hair loosened, panic-stricken, their pride broken by defeat, their limbs dripping with sweat, in their bewilderment, they fled in confusion. Thereafter, mad with fear, looking back continually, crushing each other in their haste, they entered the city.

And when those titans had entered Lanka, those exceedingly powerful monkeys surrounded Hanuman in order to pay homage to him and the mighty Hanuman, of noble nature, honoured them all in accord with their rank.

Then the triumphant monkeys shouted with might and main and once more pursued the titans with the intention of slaying them while that great Plavaga, born of Maruta, returning to his own companions, having slain the titan, enjoyed the same renown in battle as Vishnu when he overcame the mighty Asura of immense power in the forefront of the fight.

Thereafter that monkey received the homage of the Gods and of Rama himself as also that of the exceedingly valiant Lakshmana and the Plavamgamas led by Sugriva and the great-souled Bibishana.

CHAPTER 57

Prahasta goes out to fight

HEARING of Akampana's death, the irascible Lord of the Titans with a downcast mien, took counsel with his ministers and, having reflected awhile and deliberated with them, Ravana, the Lord of the Titans, passed the forenoon in inspecting the defences; and the King passed through that city, decorated with banners and flags, guarded by the titans and filled with innumerable troops.

Seeing Lanka beseiged, Ravana, the Sovereign of the Titans, said to the devoted Prahasta, a skilled soldier :—

" This city thus beleaguered and hard pressed, O Skilful Warrior, may only be delivered by myself, Kumbhakarna, thou, who art in command of the army, Indrajita or Nikumbha; none else could undertake such a task!

" Taking a company of warriors, do thou speedily place thyself in their midst and set forth in order to triumph over those inhabitants of the woods. In this sortie, as soon as the army of monkeys hear the uproar created by the titans, they will disperse. Volatile, undisciplined and fickle, the monkeys will not be able to endure thy cry, any more than an elephant can endure the roaring of a lion. His army routed, Rama with Saumitri, robbed of further authority, will fall into thy power, O Prahasta.

"A hypothetical misfortune is preferable to one that is certain! Whether it be unpleasing to hear or no, say what thou considerest to be to our advantage! "

Thus addressed by that Indra among Titans, Prahasta, the leader of the army, answered him as Ushanas the King of the Asuras, saying :—

" O King, formerly we discussed this matter with the wise and, after examining the different points of view, a disagreement arose between us. To return Sita was what I considered the most advantageous course, not to do so, meant war; we forsaw this.

" I have ever been heaped with gifts and honours by thee as also with every mark of friendship. When the opportunity

arises, is it not for me to render thee a service? Nay, I shall neither spare life, children, wife nor wealth! Know me to be ready to sacrifice my life in thine interest in battle!"

Having spoken thus to his brother, the General Prahasta said to his leading officers who stood before him:—

"Gather a large army together immediately; to-day the flesh-eating birds and beasts shall feed on the enemy that I strike down on the battlefield with my swift arrows!"

At this command those highly powerful leaders assembled the forces in the abode of the King of the Titans. In an instant, Lanka was filled with redoubtable warriors like unto elephants, furnished with weapons of every kind.

While they propitiated the God who feeds on offerings[1] and paid homage to the brahmins, a fragrant breeze, bearing the scent of clarified butter, began to blow and the titans, all ready for battle, taking hold of garlands of every kind, adorned themselves with delight. Thereafter, armed with bows and mail, they set out in their chariots at a brisk pace, their eyes turned towards their King, Ravana. And they ranged themselves round Prahasta whilst he paid obeisance to his Sovereign to the beating of a gong of dreadful sound, whereafter, with his weapons, that general ascended his chariot that was furnished with all that was needful, harnessed to exceedingly swift steeds, skilfully driven and in perfect condition.

Rumbling like a great cloud, shining like the moon itself, unapproachable as the serpent that served as its standard, solidly and artistically constructed, decorated with a net of pure gold, smiling as it were in its magnificence, such was the car in which Prahasta, having received Ravana's command, stood.

Then the titan set out from Lanka immediately in the midst of a powerful army and, at his departure, a rolling of drums, resembling the roar of Parjanya, and a blast of fanfares arose that seemed to fill the earth and, with the blare of conches, the titans advanced, creating a terrible uproar.

Narantaka, Kumbhahanu, Mahanada and Samunata, colossal giants, his adjutants, surrounded Prahasta who emerged from the eastern gate in the midst of an immense, formidable and powerful army resembling a herd of elephants and, in the centre

[1] The Fire-god, Agni.

of that force, vast as the sea, Prahasta in his fury appeared like Death at the end of the world, whilst the uproar, that arose on his setting forth with his titans raising their war cries, drew a sinister answering call from all creatures.

In a cloudless sky, birds of prey advancing to meet the chariot, circled from left to right; fearful jackals vomited forth fire and flames, howling lugubriously; a meteor fell from heaven and the wind blew chill; planets, in opposition to each other, lost their brilliance whilst clouds with a raucous sound showered blood on Prahasta's car with which his attendants were bespattered; a croaking vulture, facing the south, alighted on the top of his standard depriving that titan of his lustre. His charioteer, who never turned back in battle, despite his skill, again and again allowed the goad to fall from his hand. The brilliance of that sortie of incomparable pomp vanished in an instant and the horses stumbled on the even ground.

Beholding Prahasta, renowned for his martial valour, advancing to give battle, the army of monkeys, furnished with weapons of every kind, went forward to meet him and a formidable clamour arose amongst them as they tore up the trees and seized hold of great rocks.

Thereafter the titans yelled and the monkeys roared, both armies being filled with ardour and, in their fury and zeal and their impatience to slay each other, they challenged one another with tremendous shouts.

Meanwhile Prahasta advanced on the forces of the monkeys whom in his folly he imagined he would destroy and, with an impetuous bound, he hurled himself upon that army as a grasshopper falls into a flame.

CHAPTER 58

The Death of Prahasta

BEHOLDING Prahasta setting out with martial ardour, the Conqueror Rama, smiling, enquired of Bibishana, saying :—

" Who is this colossus surrounded by an immense army,

who with such speed, valour and courage, advances so swiftly? Make known to me this brave ranger of the night."

On this enquiry, Bibishana answered:—

"Prahasta is the name of this titan; he is the leader of the army; a third of the forces belonging to the King of the Titans accompanies him. He is courageous, a master of the science of weapons and a warrior renowned for his prowess."

While the terrible Prahasta of formidable exploits advanced roaring, that colossus, surrounded by his troops, was observed by the great and powerful army of the monkeys who began to emit cries of defiance.

Swords, lances, daggers, spears, darts, maces, bludgeons, bars, javelins and axes of every kind with many different bows glittered in the hands of the titans who, desirous of victory, fell upon the monkeys.

Trees in flower, rocks, huge and heavy stones were the weapons of the Plavamgamas, who were burning to fight and, as they approached each other, a formidable struggle arose between those innumerable combatants, who showered down a hail of stones and arrows. In the conflict, countless titans caused the death of thousands of mighty monkeys and countless monkeys destroyed as many titans. Some of the combatants fell under the lances, others under great arrows, some were struck down by the blows of bars, others cloven by axes. Deprived of their life's breath they lay on the earth their hearts transfixed or cut to pieces by the avalanche of missiles. And those monkeys fell on the earth cut in two by the strokes of swords, their sides torn open by those bold titans and they, on their part, full of fury, overthrew the enemy ranks, heaping the earth with them, and they struck at them with trees and crags, administering thundering slaps and terrific blows with their fists, so that the titans, blinded, their faces ashen, vomited blood.

Thereafter an appalling clamour arose and, amidst cries of pain and leonine roars, the monkeys and titans, each maddened, their features distorted, following the path of heroes, conducted themselves with great courage. Narantaka, Kumbhahanu, Mahanada and Samunnata, Prahasta's companions, decimated those inhabitants of the woods, hurling themselves on the monkeys in rage, destroying them; and Dvivida struck down

one of them named Narantaka ; then the ape Durmukha, leaping up in his turn, with a ready hand, struck Samunnata with a great tree; Jambavan, in the height of anger, seizing a huge stone hurled it with force on Mahanada's chest and, on his side, the valiant Kumbhahanu, having attacked the General Tara, who was armed with a huge tree, received a blow that cost him his life.

Infuriated by the quadruple murder, Prahasta, who stood in his chariot, with the bow held in his hand, caused a dreadful havoc amongst the monkeys and the two armies became a vortex, resembling a roaring tempest over a vast ocean. In that great battle, the titan, intoxicated with combat, in his fury annihilated the monkeys under an immense avalanche of arrows. The corpses of monkeys and titans heaped the ground and covered it like hideous mountains and the earth, running with the blood which inundated it, shone as in the month of Spring when covered by the blossoming Palasha Trees.

With the heaps of warriors for its banks, the broken weapons its trees, the torrents of blood its huge waves, death appeared like an ocean receiving its floods ; livers and spleens its mire, entrails its moss, severed heads and trunks the fish, and morsels of flesh the grass, innumerable vultures its lovely swans, herons its geese, covered as it was with fat for the foam, the tumult the sound of its waters, the battlefield resembled a river, incapable of being crossed, visited by waterfowl at the end of the rainy season. And the foremost of the titans and the monkeys crossed over that impassable river as elephants lead their herds across a lake that the lotuses have covered with pollen.

Meanwhile Prahasta, standing in his chariot, letting fly countless shafts scattering the Plavamgamas, was observed by Nila and, like unto a violent wind, the General of the Titans beheld Nila advancing on him like a mass of clouds in the sky.

Directing his chariot bright as the sun towards him, that foremost of archers, stretching his bow in the midst of the fray, covered Nila with his barbed shafts, which, piercing him in their rapid flight, passed through his body and, like furious serpents, buried themselves in the earth with great spurts. When Nila was wounded by those pointed shafts resembling tongues of fire, that huge and mighty monkey, brandishing a tree, struck that

exceedingly redoubtable Prahasta who had set upon him with such fury.

Roaring with anger under his blows, that lion among titans overwhelmed the monkey chief with a rain of arrows and the shower of missiles loosed by that cruel demon was received by the monkey with closed eyes. Like a bull standing under a sudden autumnal downpour, so under that intolerable rain of darts, Nila immediately closed his eyes, suffering it, though it was scarce to be endured. Mad with rage, under the hail of arrows, that great and mighty monkey, arming himself with a Sala Tree, struck down Prahasta's horses and thereafter his heart surging with anger he severed the bow of that barbarian, shouting again and again.

Deprived of his bow, Prahasta, the leader of the army, seizing a formidable mace, leapt down from his chariot, and those two generals, facing each other, adversaries full of courage, their limbs covered with blood, like unto two elephants with broken tusks, tore each other with their sharp teeth. Lion and tiger in gait, lion and tiger in prowess, those two warriors, vanquishers of other heroes, intrepid combatants, thirsting for fame, resembled Vritra and Vasava.

Meanwhile Prahasta with a supreme effort struck Nila on the forehead with his mace, causing the blood to flow, whereupon that powerful monkey, his limbs covered with gore, seized a great tree and struck Prahasta full in the chest with fury. He, however, not heeding the impact, brandishing an enormous iron bar, hurled himself on the valiant Plavamgama. Seeing him advancing towards him with terrific bounds, full of rage, the mighty monkey Nila, snatched up a great rock which he swiftly threw at the head of his bellicose opponent armed with a mace. Loosed by that monkey chief, that immense and formidable stone broke into several pieces on Prahasta's head and the titan, deprived of breath, lustre, strength and consciousness instantly fell on the earth, like a tree severed at the root.

From his riven head and body the blood flowed, so that it resembled a torrent falling from a mountain. Prahasta being slain by Nila, the invincible and mighty army of the titans bereft of joy, fled to Lanka, their leader having succumbed, nor

could they be stayed, as the waters of the sea may not be stemmed by a broken dyke.

Their leader slain, the titans disconsolate regained the abode of their sovereign. Dumb and dispirited, plunged in an ocean of burning grief, they appeared to have lost their wits.

The triumphant warrior Nila, however, on his return, was honoured by Rama with Lakshmana who accompanied him, and experienced supreme joy.

CHAPTER 59

Ravana's Prowess. Rama overcomes him but grants him his Life

THEIR General having succumbed in the fight against the foremost of the monkeys, the heavily armed forces of the King of the Titans took to flight with the speed of the tide.

Coming before their lord, they apprised him of the death of their leader who had fallen under the blows of the Fire-god's offspring, and at these tidings, the king was transported with anger. Learning that Prahasta had perished in the fight, his heart was filled with grief and he addressed the foremost of his leaders, as Indra those who never grow old[1] and said :—

" That foe is not to be despised, under whose blows the destroyer of Indra's host, the leader of my army with his followers and elephants, fell. I myself shall enter this strange battlefield without hesitation in order to obtain victory and destroy the enemy. As a forest is consumed by fire, so shall I to-day with a myriad arrows burn up the simian army with Rama and Lakshmana."

Speaking thus, that enemy of the Lord of the Celestials ascended his chariot which shone like a flame and was yoked to a team of horses, its brilliance increased by the splendour of his person.

The sound of trumpets, gongs, drums and leonine roars accompanied by the clapping of hands, acclamations and hymns

[1] The Gods, who are said to remain young.

of praise, frenziedly greeted the departure of the Sovereign of the Titans. Those eaters of flesh, resembling mountains or clouds, whose glances flashed like torches, surrounded the supreme Leader of the Titans as he marched out, like unto the Bhutas escorting Rudra, the Lord of the Immortals. Issuing from the city, that monarch observed the army of ferocious monkeys with trees and rocks in their hands, ready for combat, roaring like a vast ocean or a mass of thunder clouds.

Seeing the demon divisions seething with fury, the incomparably illustrious Rama, whose arms resembled great serpents, accompanied by his forces, said to Bibishana :—

" Who is in command of this army furnished with every kind of standard, banner and canopy, armed with javelins, swords, stakes and other weapons and missiles, that is indomitable and composed of intrepid soldiers and elephants as high as the Mahendra Mountain ? "

Thus interrogated, Bibishana, the equal of Shakra in valour, pointed out the principal leaders of those courageous lions among the titans to him and said :—

" That hero of coppery hue mounted on the back of an elephant, causing its head to sway, the rival of the rising sun, know, O Prince, to be Akampana.

" He who, standing in his chariot, brandishes his bow which resembles Shakra's, whose standard bears the image of a lion and who is like unto an elephant with its long curved tusks, is Indrajita, who is renowned for the boons he has received from Brahma.

" That archer yonder, like unto the Vindhya, Asta or Mahendra Mountains, standing in his car, a mighty warrior, who wields a bow of unequalled size, is called Atikaya on account of his immense stature.

" The tawny-eyed warrior resembling the dawn, riding a wild elephant with its bells jangling, who is shouting aloud, is Mahodara.

" The rider of the brilliantly caparisoned steed he, who is armed with a gleaming javelin and resembles a mass of evening clouds, whose fury rivals the lightning and possesses the velocity of a well-directed thunder-bolt, who is seated on the foremost of bulls and shines like the moon, is Trishiras. The other,

resembling a thunder-cloud, of large and well-developed chest, who is twanging his bow and has the King of the Snakes as his standard, is Kumbha.

"The one who carries a mace decorated with gold and diamonds from which flames and smoke issue, who advances as a standard bearer to the titan army, is Nikumbha of prodigious exploits.

"That warrior in a chariot adorned with flags, gleaming like a glowing brazier, who is furnished with bows, swords and arrows, is Narantaka, who, in combat, fights with mountain peaks.

"Finally the one who appears surrounded by spectres of dreadful form with heads of tigers, buffalo, mighty elephants, deer and horses, riding under a white canopy with a slender handle, his diadem resembling the moon, he who is the humbler of the Gods themselves, like unto Rudra amidst the Bhutas is the mighty Lord of the Titans himself. His countenance is graced by swinging earrings, his formidable stature equals the Vindhya, that Lord of Mountains, he who brought Mahendra and Vaivasvat low, is the King of the Titans, equal to the sun in splendour."

Then Rama, the subduer of his foes answered Bibishana and said :—

"Ah! What glory, what exceeding majesty is Ravana's, the Lord of the Titans! As one cannot gaze on the sun, neither can the eye rest on him, such is the blinding strength of his magnificence! Neither Devas, Danavas nor heroes possess a body equal to his! Who can rival the brilliance of the King of the Titans? All are as high as hills, all have crags as their weapons, all are furnished with fiery darts. The Lord of the Titans stands out among those ardent warriors as Antaka amidst the impetuous Bhutas of strange form. It is to his destruction that that wretch comes to-day within my sight! To-day I shall slake my wrath born of Sita's abduction!"

At these words, the valiant Rama who was accompanied by Lakshmana, took up his bow and, standing erect, placed an arrow, the most powerful of all, upon it.

Meanwhile the haughty Monarch of the Titans said to his brave troops :—

"Take up your positions unfalteringly at the gates and principal exits, the outposts and fortifications. Learning of my presence amongst you, these savages will try and profit by this opportunity to take this heretofore impregnable city by surprise, it being now denuded of its defenders, and they will then immediately put it to the sword with their united forces."

Thereafter Ravana dismissed his escort and the titans left on his orders, whereupon he plunged into the sea of monkeys, agitating it as a great fish the waters of the ocean.

As soon as that Indra of the Titans with his bow and burnished arrows had thrown himself into the fray, the leader of the monkeys rushed out to meet him, tearing up a great mountain peak. Seizing that rock covered with innumerable trees, he hurled it at that prowler of the night, who, seeing it flying towards him, broke it in pieces with his golden-stemmed arrows. That huge and high peak covered with trees being shattered, fell on the earth, and the Lord of the Titans, like unto another Antaka, selected a dart resembling a great serpent. Taking up that arrow, which rivalled Anila in velocity and possessed the brilliance of fire and the force of lightning, he loosed it with fury on Sugriva in order to slay him, and that weapon, equal to Shakra's thunderbolt, loosed by Ravana's arm, penetrated Sugriva's breast in its flight as formerly Guha's spear when he discharged it at the Krauncha Mountain.

Wounded by that missile which bereft him of consciousness, that warrior fell moaning to the earth. Beholding him stretched on the ground deprived of his senses, the Yatudhanas raised a shout of triumph.

Thereupon Gavaksha, Gavaya, Sushena as well as Rishabha, Jyotirmukha and Nala, of exceeding corpulence, tearing up rocks, hurled themselves on the King of the Titans. Then that Lord of the Titans, with hundreds of arrows possessed of sharp points, rendered their projectiles fruitless and pierced those leaders of the monkeys with a hail of marvellous golden-shafted arrows.

Under the blows with which the Enemy of the Gods assailed them, those generals of terrifying stature were overcome, whereupon he covered that formidable army of monkeys with a shower of arrows.

Assailed and wounded, those warriors emitted cries of terror and pain, and those deer of the branches, whom Ravana was destroying with his darts, fled for refuge to the intrepid Rama, whereupon that mighty and skilful archer, Raghava, seizing a weapon, set out at once. Lakshmana however, approaching him with joined palms, addressed him in moving tones, and said :—

" Truly, O Noble Brother, I am able to slay this wretch! It is I who will destroy him, do thou give me leave, O Lord ! "

Then the exceedingly powerful Rama, a true hero, answered him saying :—

" Go, O Lakshmana, and in this duel may thy valour prevail! Without doubt Ravana is endowed with great strength, he is a warrior of outstanding prowess ; the Three Worlds themselves could not withstand his fury ; seek out his weak points and guard against thine own ; be ever vigilant and defend thyself with eye and bow ! "

Thus spoke Raghava and Saumitri embraced him, thereafter offering obeisance to him and bidding him farewell, he entered the lists. There he beheld Ravana with arms as large as the trunks of elephants, who was brandishing his dread and fiery bow, covering the monkeys, whose limbs he had severed with a close rain of darts.

Beholding this, the exceedingly energetic Hanuman, born of Maruta, in order to bring that rain of arrows to an end, rushed on Ravana and, approaching his chariot, lifted his right arm and threatened him ; thereafter the sagacious Hanuman addressed him, saying :—

" Thou hast obtained the boon of invulnerability to Devas, Danavas, Gandharvas, Yakshas and also Rakshasas but the monkeys are a danger to thee ! This five-branched hand of mine,[1] which I now raise, will rob thee of the life that has long been resident in thy body ! "

At these words of Hanuman, the exceedingly valiant Ravana, his eyes inflamed with anger, answered :—

" Strike swiftly without fear ! Win eternal renown, having measured thy strength with mine, I shall destroy thee ! "

[1] Four fingers and the thumb.

Then the son of the Wind answered Ravana who spoke thus, saying :—

" Recollect that I have slain thy son Aksha already ! "

At this, the powerful Lord of the Titans struck the son of Anila a violent blow with the palm of his hand and the monkey reeled; thereafter the mighty and illustrious Hanuman recovered his balance and, steadying himself, struck that enemy of the Immortals in fury. Under the violent impact of the monkey's blow, Dashagriva shook like a mountain when the earth trembles.

Seeing Ravana struck in the fight, Rishis, Siddhas and monkeys raised a great shout, as also the Devas, Suras and Asuras.

Then the extremely spirited Ravana, having regained his breath, said :—

" Well done ! Well done ! O Monkey, thou art an adversary worthy of praise ! "

Thus did he speak, and Maruti answered him, saying :— " Cursed be that strength since thou dost still survive, O Ravana ! Now come, enter into a decisive struggle with me, O Perverse Wretch ! Why this boasting ? My fist is about to despatch thee to the abode of Yama ! "

Hearing Hanuman's words, the powerful Ravana, enraged, his eyes red with fury, whirling his fist with force brought it down violently on the monkey's chest and, under the shock, Hanuman reeled once more, whilst the King of the Titans, Dashagriva, that exceedingly fiery warrior, seeing his valiant opponent bereft of strength, turned his chariot towards Nila. With his arrows, like unto great serpents, he pierced the vital parts of his enemy overwhelming the Monkey General, but Nila, the leader of the monkey army, assailed by that hail of weapons, with one hand flung a great rock at the King of the Titans.

Meanwhile Hanuman, burning with courage, having recovered his senses, in his martial ire cried out furiously :— " O Ravana, King of the Titans, who art engaged in combat with Nila, to attack one already fighting with another is unjust ! "

The titan, however, shattered the crag, hurled by Nila, with seven pointed darts so that it fell in pieces and, seeing the rock riven asunder, the leader of the monkey army, Nila, destroyer of hostile forces, who resembled the Fire of Time, glowed with fury and began to hurl Asvakarna, Sala, Cuta and other flowering

trees of varying fragrance in the fight, whereupon Ravana caught them in his arms and snapped them, showering a formidable rain of shafts, as from a cloud, on Pavaki[1] but that colossus, assuming a diminutive form, leapt on to the point of Ravana's standard.

Beholding the offspring of Pavaki thus installed on the point of his standard, the King blazed with fury, whilst Nila let forth a shout, and sometimes the monkey leapt on to the apex of the banner and sometimes on to the end of the bow and sometimes on to the peak of the diadem, so that Lakshmana, Hanuman and Rama also, were astonished.

The intrepid titan too was amazed at the monkey's agility and took up a marvellous and flaming arrow but the Plavamgamas shouted joyously at Nila's tactics, being amused to see Ravana disconcerted by his leaping about in combat and the shouts of the monkeys infuriated Dashagriva, who, in his confusion, did not know how to act.

Taking up an arrow charged with sacred formulas, that prowler of the night aimed at Nila, who had climbed to the tip of his standard and, at that instant, the King of the Titans, said :—

" O Monkey, thine agility proceeds from a rare power of magic ; do thou save thyself if thou canst by these innumerable tricks with which thou art familiar and constantly employest ! This mantra-propelled weapon of mine, that I am about to loose, will sever the existence thou seekest to retain ! "

Speaking thus, the long-armed Ravana, Lord of the Titans, having placed Agni's shaft on his bow, struck Nila, the General of the monkey army, with that weapon and he, pierced through the breast by that shaft charged with sacred mantras, was suddenly overcome and fell to the earth, yet by virtue of his sire's powerful aid and his own native vigour, though brought to his knees he was not deprived of life.

Beholding the monkey unconscious, Dashagriva, insatiable in combat, in his chariot, whose rattling resounded like thunder-clouds, rushed on Lakshmana and coming to the centre of the field, halted, standing there in his glory.

Thereafter the majestic Lord of the Titans lifted up his bow,

[1] Pavaki—The name of Nila as son of the God of Fire.

whereupon Saumitri, of indomitable courage, said to him as he prepared to loose his powerful shaft :—

"O King of the Night-rangers, now enter into combat with me ; cease from fighting with the monkeys ! "

Hearing that marvellously modulated voice that resounded like the twanging of a bow-string, the King, drawing near to his adversary, who stood close to his chariot, answered in anger :—

"O Son of Raghu, it is my good fortune that brings thee within my range to-day, thou who, in thy folly, advancest to meet thy death ! This very instant thou shalt descend to the region of Mrityu under a rain of missiles loosed by me."

Then Saumitri, unmoved, spoke to that boastful titan of sharp and protruding teeth, saying :—

"O King, stout hearts eschew bragging ! O Greatest of Evil Doers, thou art sounding thine own praises ! I am well acquainted with thy strength, prowess, vigour and audacity, O King of the Titans ! Approach ! Here I stand with bow and arrows in my hand ; of what use are vain boasts ? "

Thus accosted, the Lord of the Titans, infuriated, let fly seven marvellously plumed arrows which Lakshmana shattered with his golden-shafted darts. Observing his shafts resembling great serpents, whose coils had been crushed in an instant, the Lord of Lanka was transported with anger and let fly further sharp arrows. The younger brother of Rama, however, caused a well-aimed rain of missiles from his bow to fall on Ravana, but he, with the aid of weapons in the forms of knives, crescents and long-eared arrowheads, severed them, without allowing them to disturb him.

Seeing that the succession of his shafts proved useless, the King of those hostile to the Gods, astonished at Lakshmana's skill, let fly more whetted shafts upon him anew and, from his side, Lakshmana, the equal of Mahendra, placing some sharpened darts on his bow that were formidable,swift as lightning and of blazing effulgence, loosed them on the Titan King in order to strike him down, whereupon Ravana shattered those pointed darts and struck his rival in the forehead with a shaft as bright as the Fire of Time, which had been bestowed on him by Swyambhu. Then Lakshmana, struck by that missile, reeled a little, scarcely able to retain his bow but coming to himself with

difficulty, he shattered that weapon belonging to Indra's foe. Having broken his bow, the son of Dasaratha struck him with three pointed darts and the king, pierced by those arrows, swooned, regaining his senses with difficulty. Wounded by those shafts, his bow wholly demolished, his limbs spattered with flesh and streaming with blood, the Enemy of the Gods, himself of formidable energy, seized a spear which had been given him in war by Swyambhu. That smoking lance, as bright as fire, the terror of the monkeys in the fray, the powerful guardian of the titan empire, was hurled on Saumitri the younger brother of Bharata, who received that spear falling upon him with arrows and darts, as if it were a sacrificial fire ; nevertheless that weapon entered his broad chest.

The powerful Raghu, struck by that spear, lay on the earth, breathing fire and the King of the Titans rushing on him suddenly, while he was yet insensible, seized him brutally in his two hands, yet though he was able to lift up Himavat, Mandara, Meru and the Three Worlds with the Gods, he could not raise the younger brother of Bharata, for Lakshmana, though wounded in the breast by Brahma's weapon, recollected that he was of the substance of Vishnu Himself, and that thorn in the side of the Gods, though overcoming Saumitri, was unable to bear him away.

At that instant, the son of Vayu, enraged, threw himself in anger on Ravana like a flash of lightning and struck him with his fist on the chest. Under that blow, the Lord of the Titans was brought to his knees and stumbling, fell. From his ten mouths, eyes and ears, blood streamed in torrents and, rolling unconscious, he slid under the body of the chariot; there he remained deprived of his senses, stupified, not knowing where he was. Beholding Ravana, despite his redoubtable strength swoon on the battlefield, Rishis and monkeys began to shout in triumph as did also the Gods and Asuras, whilst the courageous Hanuman lifting up Lakshmana in his arms, who had been wounded by his adversary, returned to Raghava. In his friendship and extreme devotion to him, the son of Vayu found Lakshmana, whom foes were unable to move, as light as a feather. Thereafter the spear, that had overcome Saumitri, returned to the titan's chariot.

Meanwhile Ravana who was full of energy in combat, having recovered consciousness, selected some steel-pointed arrows and armed himself with an enormous bow.

On his side, healed and freed from that lance, Lakshmana recollected that he was part of Vishnu, and Rama, seeing the innumerable army of powerful monkeys overthrown on the battlefield, rushed on Ravana, but Hanuman, following him, said :—

" Climb on my shoulders in order to overcome the titan ! "

Hearing those words from the son of Vayu, Raghava climbed on the shoulders of that great monkey, as Vishnu on Garuda, in order to fight with the Enemy of the Gods.

Standing in his chariot, Ravana appeared before that Lord of Men and, seeing him, that mighty hero rushed upon him, like unto Vishnu with his mace upraised rushing furiously on Virochana. Thereupon Rama drew the cord of his bow and, like unto the roll of thunder, said in a deep voice to the Lord of the Titans :—

" Stay ! Stay ! Thou hast evoked my displeasure ! Where, O Tiger among the Titans, wilt thou flee to escape me ? Even if thou seekest refuge in the region of Indra or Vaivaswata or Bhaskara or Swyambhu, Vaishnavara, Shankara or in the ten regions, even in those abodes thou shalt not elude me from now on. The one who, struck by the spear, fell swooning this day only to recover consciousness immediately, shall now, assuming the form of death, claim thee, thy sons, and grandsons in battle. O King of the Titan People, here is he under whose blows, fourteen thousand titans of terrible form perished, who had established themselves in Janasthana and were furnished with excellent weapons."

Hearing Raghava speak thus, the exceedingly powerful Lord of the Titans full of rage, hurled himself on the son of Vayu, who was bearing Rama with extreme velocity through the fray and, recollecting his former hostility, he smote him with flaming arrows resembling the tongues of the Fire of Dissolution. Struck by that titan as also pierced by his darts, the native strength of which Hanuman was possessed increased still further. Nevertheless the extremely illustrious Rama, seeing the wound that Ravana had just inflicted on that lion among the Plavagas,

was transported with anger and, approaching his chariot with his slender and pointed shafts, shattered it with its wheels, horses, banner, canopy, great standard, charioteer, darts, spears and swords; thereafter, with great force, he hurled a weapon like unto a thunderbolt falling on Mount Meru so that that valiant monarch, whom neither thunder nor lightning could cause to tremble, stumbled, letting fall his bow at the violent impact of Rama's missile, which created a deep wound.

Seeing him swooning, the magnanimous Rama took up a flaming arrow shaped like a crescent moon and used it to shatter the crown of the supreme Lord of the Titans, which was as bright as the sun.

Then Rama said to that Indra of the Titans, whose splendour was dimmed, the setting of his diadem riven, and who resembled a venomous snake robbed of its poison, or the sun, its rays extinguished, bereft of lustre :—

" Thou hast accomplished a great feat and my brave soldiers have succumbed beneath thy blows; now thou art weary; in this condition I shall not put thee under Mrityu's power with my shafts. Leave the fray and return to Lanka; I grant thee this reprieve, O King of the Rangers of the Night! Having regained thy breath, return in thy chariot with thy bow and, standing on thy car, thou shalt once more bear testimony to my prowess! "

At these words, his joy and boasting subdued, his bow shattered, his horses and charioteer slain, pierced with arrows, his great diadem broken, the king instantly returned to Lanka.

After the departure of that powerful Indra of Night Rangers, Lakshmana drew out the arrows from the monkeys, which they had received while fighting in the forefront of that vast battlefield, and the adversary of the King of the Gods being vanquished, all the Celestials, Asuras and creatures of the ocean and other regions with the great serpents, as also all beings on earth and in the waters, rejoiced.

CHAPTER 60

The Titans rouse Kumbhakarna

RETURNING to the City of Lanka, afflicted with the fear of Rama's arrows, his pride humbled, the king's mind was troubled. Like an elephant by a lion or a snake by Garuda, that monarch had been overcome by the great-souled Rama, and the Lord of the Titans was maddened by the mere recollection of Rama's shafts possessed of the splendour of lightning, resembling the Rod of Brahma.

Seated on his magnificent and elevated throne made of gold, he let his gaze wander over the titans and said :—

" Since I, the equal of the mighty Indra, have been defeated by a mere man, all the rigorous asceticism I have practised has been in vain. I asked to be rendered invulnerable to Devas, Danavas, Gandharvas, Yakshas, Rakshasas and Pannagas, but of man I made no mention. Rama, the son of Dasaratha is the one, I deem, of whom Anaranya,[1] born of the race of Ikshvaku spoke, saying :—

" 'O Lord of the Titans, in my House will be born a man who will slay thee in battle with thy sons, ministers, army and charioteer, O Vilest of Thy Race, O Perverse Wretch ! '

" I was further cursed by Vedavati for a former outrage and perchance she has been born as the high-souled daughter of Janaka and what was predicted by Uma, Nandishwara, Rambha and Punjikasthala, the daughter of Varuna, has come to pass ! The words of the sages never prove false, it is on account of all this therefore that you should exert yourselves to the uttermost.

" Let the titans go to the summit of the Charyapura Mountain and awaken Kumbhakarna on whom the curse of Brahma rests, he who is without equal in prowess and who humbles the pride of the Gods and Danavas themselves."

[1] The stories of Anaranya, Vedavati and Punjikasthala are told in Uttarakanda.

Prahasta being slain and the king himself defeated in the fight, that monarch issued his commands to the dreadful host, saying :—

" Guard the gates and man the ramparts, rouse Kumbhakarna who is slumbering soundly. He is sleeping peacefully oblivious of all that is passing, his senses overcome by lust, and he remains unconscious for periods of two or three or nine days and sometimes for six, seven or eight months. Having met in consultation with me nine days ago, he has since fallen asleep. In combat, that warrior is the rampart of all the titans ; he will soon strike down all the monkeys and those two sons of a king. He is the very banner of the titans in battle but that insensate one, intent on vulgar pleasures, still slumbers. Though overcome by Rama in this terrible struggle, my fears will be dissipated when Kumbhakarna wakes ; of what use is this rival of Indra to me, if, in so pressing a danger, he is not ready to assist me ? "

Hearing their sovereign's words, the titans ran in great haste to Kumbhakarna's abode. At Ravana's command, those eaters of flesh and drinkers of blood took perfumes, garlands and a great store of food and left immediately. They entered that cave with its gates measuring a league in extent, the wonderful refuge of Kumbhakarna, from which issued the fragrance of flowers. And with his breathing, Kumbhakarna pressed those titans back despite their strength who, with difficulty, had penetrated into the cave.

When they had entered into that ravishing underground dwelling paved with precious stones and gold, those lions among the Nairritas beheld that redoubtable giant lying there, and that monster, wrapt in profound slumber, resembled a crumbling mountain and together they sought to waken him.

His limbs covered with down which stood on end, Kumbhakarna, he of irresistible valour, was breathing like a serpent, and, as he slept, he emitted dreadful snores, his nostrils being horrible and his mouth a gaping hell. Stretched to his full length on the earth, he gave forth an odour of marrow and blood ; his limbs were adorned with golden armlets and he wore a diadem as bright as the sun ; thus did that lion among the Nairritas, Kumbhakarna, the slayer of his foes, appear !

Then those powerful titans, in order to satisfy him, placed a heap of venison as high as Mount Meru before him and piled up a great mass of viands, antelope, buffalo and bear and a prodigious mound of victuals, leathern bottles of blood and meats of every kind before Kumbhakarna, the Enemy of the Gods. Thereafter they rubbed that scourge of his foes with the most rare sandalwood and covered him with celestial garlands, and sweet smelling perfumes, and they burnt incense and hymned the praises of that warrior who proved fatal to his foes.

The voices of the Yatudhanas burst forth on every side like thunder and with full cheeks they blew impatiently on their conches as bright as the moon, causing a terrible uproar, and those rangers of the night clapped their hands and shook Kumbhakarna, creating a great clamour, in order to awaken him, so that the birds passing through the air fell down at the sound of the conches, drums, gongs, clapping of hands and leonine roars.

As the illustrious Kumbhakarna did not waken from his slumber despite the great uproar, all those troops of titans seized hold of bars, pestles, maces, rocks, clubs, hammers, and with these and blows from their fists, those titans beat the chest of Kumbhakarna violently as he was sleeping peacefully on the ground. And Kumbhakarna's breathing prevented those titans from standing upright so that they had to seat themselves round him and, with all their strength, which was considerable, they began to beat drums, cymbals and gongs and to blow their myriad conches and trumpets. Ten thousand demons surrounded that colossus who resembled a heap of antimony, and tried in every way to rouse him by their blows and cries; nevertheless he did not wake.

As they were unable to rouse him by these means, they had resort to more energetic and ruthless methods, causing horses, camels and elephants, whom they beat with sticks, whips and thongs, to trample upon him, while gongs, conches and trumpets blared forth as they crushed his limbs under piles of heavy logs. The noise of the hammers and pestles they wielded with all their strength and the shouts they raised filled the whole of Lanka with its hills and woods but still he did not wake.

Then they beat a thousand drums simultaneously with sticks of refined gold but yet he did not stir from his profound slumber, being under the spell of the divine curse.

Finally those powerful rangers of the night, growing enraged, redoubled their efforts in order to rouse the titan and some beat drums, some shouted, some tore out his hair and others bit his ears, pouring hundreds of pitchers of water into them, but Kumbhakarna, plunged in deep sleep, did not stir. Some armed with daggers struck that mighty titan on the head, chest and limbs but that monster did not wake, though smitten by Shataghnis fastened with ropes, and at last a thousand titans ran up and down his body, till Kumbhakarna, becoming aware of that pressure, he who had remained insensible to the violent blows of crags and trees, under the prompting of extreme hunger suddenly emerged from sleep, yawning, and with one bound, stood up. Waving his two arms resembling serpent's coils or the peaks of mountains, hard as cut diamonds, that ranger of the night opened his monstrous mouth, like unto Vadavamukha and yawned horribly, and when he yawned, his mouth resembled hell and glittered like the sun rising over the high peak of Mt. Meru.

That extremely powerful ranger of the night, being awake, yawned, heaving a sigh like unto a tempest that shatters a mountain; and Kumbhakarna, rising up, resembling Time at the dissolution of the world, prepared to devour all beings and his two great eyes, like glowing braziers, glittering like lightning, resembled two huge flaming planets.

Then they pointed to those victuals of every kind, boar and buffalo and the giant devoured them. Thereafter that enemy of Shakra's satisfied his hunger with flesh and his thirst with blood, and he swallowed pitchers full of fat and wine, whereupon he, having feasted, those rangers of the night approached him and, surrounding him, paid obeisance to him.

Raising his eyelids that were heavy with sleep, his gaze still veiled, he let his glance fall on the night rangers on every side and, in a voice of authority, that lion among the Nairritas, surprised at being roused, enquired of them, saying :—

" For what reason have you thus wakened me so suddenly? Is all well with the king or is he in some peril? In truth there

must be some pressing and serious danger from an external source since you have come in haste to awaken me. I shall drive every misfortune away from the King of the Titans this very day even if I have to cut Mahendra himself to pieces or freeze Anala! Nay, it is certain that one does not interrupt the slumbers of one, such as I, for any trivial motive. Tell me frankly for what reason you have roused me, Kumbhakarna, the vanquisher of my foes?"

At these words, that were tinged with wrath, Yupaksha, the king's confidential minister, with joined palms, answered him saying:—

"It is not the Gods who threaten us in any way but a man who has placed us in this evil case, O Prince! It is not the Devas or Danavas who have put us in this peril; it comes to us from a mortal. Monkeys as large as hills are besieging Lanka! Furious on account of Sita's abduction, Rama is pressing us heavily. Recently a single monkey set fire to our great city and slew the youthful Prince Aksha with his escort of elephants. 'Get thee hence!' were the words addressed by Rama to the King of the Titans in person, the offspring of Poulastya, that thorn in the side of the Gods, he who is equal to Aditya in splendour. That which this monarch never suffered at the hands of the Gods or Daityas or Danavas, he has had to endure from Rama, who spared his life."

Hearing from Yupaksha that his brother had been defeated in combat, Kumbhakarna, rolling his great eyes, said:—

"This very day, O Yupaksha, the whole army of monkeys with Lakshmana and Raghava will be destroyed by me on the field of battle after I have presented myself before Ravana. I shall gorge the titans on the blood of monkeys and, as for Rama and Lakshmana, I shall drink their blood myself!"

Hearing these bold words from that titan, whose anger increased his ferocity, Mahodara, the Leader of the Nairrita warriors, having offered him obeisance with joined palms, said to him:—

"When thou hast listened to Ravana and weighed the advantages and disadvantages of the matter, then, O Long-armed Warrior, set out immediately and destroy the foe on the battlefield."

Thus spoke Mahodara and Kumbhakarna, surrounded by titans, full of energy and prowess, prepared to depart. Thereupon the titans, having succeeded in rousing that prince of dreadful aspect and formidable valour, returned to the king's palace in all haste. Approaching Dashagriva who was seated on the throne, all those night-rangers with joined palms said to him :—

"Thy brother, Kumbhakarna, has wakened, O King of the Titans, and now is it thy will that he should enter the battlefield or dost thou desire him to come hither ?"

Thereupon Ravana answered those titans who stood before him and, with a glad heart, said :—

"I desire to see him here ; let him receive the honours due to his rank !"

"Be it so !" answered all the titans and they returned to Kumbhakarna in order to apprise him of Ravana's command and said :—

"Do thou go to the king, that lion of all the titans desires to see thee; go and gratify thy brother !"

Then Kumbhakarna, that indomitable and mighty warrior, hearing what was his brother's wish, cried :—"So be it!" and leapt up from his couch. Washing his face and bathing, refreshed and delighted, he desired them to bring him to drink with speed, whereupon they brought him a soothing draught and those titans hastened to carry out Ravana's commands and presented him with wines and meats of every kind.

Having swallowed two thousand full pitchers, Kumbhakarna prepared to set out and, slightly inebriated and flushed, he was exhilarated and filled with energy. Impatiently, he marched away like Yama at the end of the World period, and approaching his brother's palace, he caused the earth to tremble with his tread. His body illumined the royal highway, like unto that orb of a thousand rays which gives light to the earth and, as he advanced, surrounded by a circle of titans paying him obeisance, he resembled Shatakratu approaching Swyambhu's abode.

Seeing that slayer of his foes on the royal highway, that monster as high as the peak of a mountain, the inhabitants of the woods, stationed outside (the city) as also their leaders, were seized with a sudden panic.

Some rushed to Rama for refuge, others fled away in fear,

some, terrified, stampeded in all directions, others, paralysed with fright, lay on the ground.

Beholding that giant like a great peak, adorned with a diadem. who seemed to quench the sun with his brilliance, the inhabitants of the woods were seized with terror and, at the sight of that prodigy, fled in all directions.

CHAPTER 61

The Story of Kumbhakarna

MEANWHILE the illustrious and valiant Rama, bow in hand, beheld that giant Kumbhakarna adorned with a diadem and, seeing that Indra among Titans with golden armlets, who resembled a mountain and was like unto a cloud charged with rain, or Narayana[1] when formerly taking the three strides, the monkeys scattered once more.

In view of the stampede of his forces and that titan, who appeared to be increasing in size, Rama, astonished, enquired of Bibishana :—

" Who is this hero with a diadem and yellow eyes, resembling a mountain, who is to be seen in Lanka like unto a cloud riven by lightning or a great and strange meteor which has fallen to earth ; he, at whose sight, the monkeys flee away on all sides ? Tell me, who is this colossus ? Is it a Rakshasa or an Asura ? Never have I seen such a being ! "

Thus questioned by Prince Rama of imperishable exploits, Bibishana, in his great wisdom, answered :—

" It is he by whom Vaivasvata and Vasava were defeated in battle ; it is the illustrious Kumbhakarna, the son of Vaishravas ! There is no titan equal to him in stature, he routed the Devas, Danavas, Yakshas, Bhujamgas, Pishitashanas, Gandharvas, Vidyadharas and Pannagas in their thousands, O Raghava ! The Gods themselves are not able to slay Kumbhakarna, who, spear in hand, is of monstrous aspect. ' It is the God of Death himself ' they cry.

[1] See glossary.

" The mighty Kumbhakarna is innately powerful, whilst the foremost of the titans owe their strength to the boons they have received. As soon as that monster was born and while yet an infant, urged on by hunger, he devoured thousands of beings. Seeing their kind consumed, those creatures, mad with fear, took refuge with Shakra and told him all that had taken place. Enraged, Mahendra struck Kumbhakarna with his mighty thunderbolt and, at the impact of Indra's weapon, that giant reeled howling with terror.

" When the cries of the titan were heard, the fear of those beings increased, and in his anger, the mighty Kumbhakarna tore out one of Airavata's tusks in order to pierce Vasava's breast and, under the blows of that monster, Indra appeared like a flame. Seeing this, the Devas, Brahmarishis and Danavas were thunderstruck and Shakra with those Celestials went to Swyambhu's abode and informed Prajapati of Kumbhakarna's wickedness ; he also described to the inhabitants of the heavenly region, how he had devoured all those creatures, laid waste the hermitages and carried off others wives and said ' If he continues to devour those beings, in a short time the whole world will become a desert'.

" Hearing Vasava's words, the Grandsire of the Worlds summoned that titan, who appeared before him. On beholding Kumbhakarna, Prajapati was troubled but, recovering himself, said to him :—

" 'Assuredly Poulastya begot thee to the destruction of the worlds ! From to-day thou shalt sleep like the dead ! ' Struck by the Lord's curse that titan fell down before him.

" Meanwhile Ravana, exceedingly perturbed, said to Brahma:—

" 'Thou hast hewn down the golden tree which was about to bear fruit! It does not behove thee to curse thine own grandson, O Prajapati ; nevertheless thy words may never prove vain ; assuredly he must slumber but at least appoint a time for sleeping and a time for waking ! '

" On Ravana's request, Swyambhu answered :—' He shall sleep for six months and wake for a single day ; for one day that warrior shall range the earth in order to appease his hunger, otherwise with his huge mouth he will consume the worlds like a great fire.'

" It is in fear of thy prowess that the King Ravana, beset with peril, has now awakened Kumbhakarna, and that warrior of exceeding valour has emerged from his retreat transported with anger and is rushing upon the monkeys in order to devour them and appease his hunger. Seeing Kumbhakarna they have taken to flight; how can those monkeys withstand him in combat? Let them be told that he is merely a mechanical device created to frighten them; at these tidings they will take heart and remain here."

Hearing Bibishana's eloquent and persuasive speech, Raghava said to the General Nila:—

" Go, rally thy forces and, having occupied the outposts of Lanka, the highways and bridges, let them strike camp, O Pavaki! See that the monkeys, furnished with rocks, trees and stones, arm themselves with these weapons."

At Rama's command, Nila, the leader in chief, a prince of monkeys, issued his orders to the army and thereafter armed with boulders, Gavaksha, Sharabha, Hanuman and Angada, like unto hills, advanced to the gates.

Having listened to Rama, the monkeys, those valiant apes, fell upon the enemy's army with shouts of triumph, battering it with trees and that ferocious company of monkeys, brandishing crags and trees, appeared as resplendent as a lowering mass of clouds spreading over a mountain.

CHAPTER 62

The Meeting between Kumbhakarna and Ravana

MEANWHILE that Lion among the Titans, resplendent in glory, still heavy with sleep, advanced with great strides along the royal highway; titans in their thousands surrounded that most invincible of warriors and, from the houses, a rain of flowers fell upon him as he passed.

Thereafter he beheld the vast and enchanting residence covered with gold of that Indra of the Titans which shone like the sun, resembling that orb when it enters a mass of clouds,

and he penetrated into the palace belonging to the King of the Titans, observing him from afar on his throne, like unto Shakra approaching Swyambhu seated in state.

Coming to Ravana's abode with his escort of titans, Kumbhakarna, pacing the earth, caused it to tremble. Having crossed the threshold of the palace, he passed through the courtyard and perceived his elder brother, who appeared troubled, seated in the Chariot Pushpaka. Full of anxiety, Dashagriva, beholding Kumbhakarna, immediately rose up joyfully and motioned him to approach.

Then that mighty warrior, bowing to the feet of his brother, who was reclining on a couch, enquired of him :—" What dost thou desire of me ? "

With renewed delight, Ravana rose and embraced him whereupon with brotherly salutations and traditional courtesies, Kumbhakarna ascended the celestial and shining throne, and that giant being seated, his eyes red with anger, enquired of Ravana :—

" Why hast thou forcibly torn me from my slumber, O King ? Say from whence springs thy fear and whom dost thou wish me to slay this day ? "

Then Ravana answered the enraged Kumbhakarna seated beside him, who was rolling his inflamed eyes, and said :—

" Thou hast slumbered for some time, O Warrior, and, in thy profound oblivion, wert indifferent to the peril in which Rama has plunged me. This glorious and mighty son of Dasaratha accompanied by Sugriva, having crossed the sea without hindrance, is destroying our race. Alas ! See how by means of a bridge, these monkeys have made an ocean of the woods and groves of Lanka !

" The foremost of the titans have been slain by them in combat, nor do I see how these monkeys can be destroyed in battle by any means. Save us from this great peril, O Mighty Hero, and exterminate them to-day ! It is on this account that thou hast been awakened ; all my resources are exhausted ! Help me to save the City of Lanka, in which the children and the aged alone remain. O Long-armed Warrior, for thy brother's sake, accomplish this feat, impossible to another. I have never before spoken thus to any of my brothers, O Scourge of Thy

Foes! I have placed my supreme hopes and affections on thee! O Bull among the Titans, how often, in the wars between Devas and Asuras, hast thou overcome the Gods and Celestial Beings ranged against thee! Call upon thy valour, assuredly among all creatures none is equal to thee in strength, O Redoubtable Hero! Render me this great service, O Thou, the lover of combat; do this for me, O Thou who art devoted to thy friends! By thy personal prowess scatter these hostile forces as the wind scatters the autumnal clouds."

CHAPTER 63

Kumbhakarna consoles Ravana

HEARING the lament of the King of the Titans, Kumbhakarna said with a mocking laugh:—

"As an evil doer falls into hell as a result of his misdeeds, a swift retribution has followed on the error of judgment we saw thee commit formerly in council through lack of trust in thy ministers! Firstly, O Great King, thou didst not reflect on what might happen and, in the pride of thine own strength, overlooked the consequences. He, who trusting in his own power, leaves until last that which should be done first or who does first, that which should follow, is unable to distinguish between what is wise and what is foolish. As offerings poured into an unsanctified fire so are those actions disastrous which are performed without regard to time and place or in opposition to them. He goes straight to the goal, who, in consultation with his ministers, has examined the three kinds of action and their five aspects[1]. A king who makes his decisions according to the traditional laws, and allows himself to be advised by his counsellors and consults his friends, pursuing duty, profit and

[1] Three kinds of action—Trivial, common or ordinary, important and urgent.
Five aspects—The consideration of (*a*) Time, (*b*) Place, (*c*) Of persons or things concerned, (*d*) Provision against mischance, (*e*) Consideration of the possibility of success.

pleasure[1] at the proper season or following two of them or all of them combined, is a wise monarch and has a sound understanding, O Lord of the Titans.

"But the sovereign or heir-apparent, who, having heard what is best for the cultivation of these three means and yet does not comprehend them, has spent his time listening to instruction in vain. The king who consults his ministers regarding the bestowal of gifts, conciliation, sowing dissension, taking action or uniting himself with the foe as also the consideration of what should or should not be done and the questions of duty, profit and pursuit of pleasure, dealing with them in conformity with circumstances, and is master of himself, is not visited by misfortune!

"He verily is a king, who, with experienced and sagacious counsellors, having studied the advantages he desires to reap from an undertaking and the wisdom of entering into it, takes action.

"One should never follow the advice of those admitted to council who are not conversant with the meaning of the scriptures, whose intelligence is equal to the beasts and who, in their conceit, prate continuously! Neither should one follow the advice of those who, in their ignorance of the tradition and the works of political science, merely seek to amass wealth. And those counsellors who, in their complacency, hold specious but sinister debates, should be excluded from any deliberation, for they mar every transaction. Those in the pay of well-informed enemies, who, in order to betray their master, advise him to act contrary to his interests, will be recognized by the king when they are in the assembly, and a monarch will soon discover those who, under the mask of devotion hide their treachery, by studying their conduct in their deliberations when they are met together. Those foolish ones, who rush precipitately into action like birds entering a hole in the Krauncha Mountain, are overwhelmed by the enemy and he who, disregarding the foe, fails to protect himself, experiences nothing but reverses and loses his status.

[1] Duty, profit and pleasure—The Three Ends of Life should be pursued in the following order :—Duty or devotion in the morning, profit or affairs in the afternoon and the pursuit of pleasure in the evening.

"The advice that the beloved Mandodari and my younger brother, Bibishana, formerly gave thee, I now repeat for thine own good; do what thou considerest best!"

Hearing Kumbhakarna's words, Dashagriva frowned and replied angrily:—

"One should pay the same respect to one's elder brother as to one's spiritual preceptor! Of what interest to me are thy counsels? Why fatigue thyself? Consider what is fitting at the moment; whatever has impeded success, whether it has been folly or too great a confidence in the strength of mine army, it is useless to discuss it now! Advise me as to what should be done in the present circumstances. Let thy valour remedy the evil that mine imprudence has brought about if thou art truly devoted to me and hast confidence in thine own prowess and if thine heart is in this great struggle and thou considerest it to be of supreme moment. He is a friend who rescues one in distress; a kinsman he, who helps one who has failed."

Thus spoke Ravana in imperious and harsh accents and Kumbhakarna reflecting within himself 'he is enraged', answered him mildly in soothing tones, Looking fixedly at his brother, whose mind was agitated, he spoke comforting words to him in a quiet voice, saying:—

"Listen carefully, O King, O Scourge of Thy Foes, O Leader of the Titan Princes, banish thy grief, renounce thine anger and be thyself again! There is no reason for thine heart to be troubled as long as I live, O Lord! I will slay him who is the cause of thy distress but, in any circumstances, I had, of necessity, to speak for thine own good because of kinship and brotherly affection for thee, O Monarch.

"It is on account of this that I will show myself to be a friend and a brother and, in combat, annihilate the enemy under thine eyes. To-day, O Long-armed Warrior, thou shalt see me in the forefront of battle, having slain Rama and his brother and put the monkey army to flight. Seeing me bring back Rama's head from the battlefield this day, thou wilt be happy, O Warrior, and Sita overwhelmed with despair.

"To-day all the titans of Lanka, whose kinsfolk have perished, will witness the death of Rama who is the object of men's desires! By striking down the foe in battle, I shall dry the

tears of those who are overcome with sorrow and have been rendered desolate by the loss of their relatives. To-day thou shalt see Sugriva, the leader of the Plavagas, who resembles a mountain illumined by the sun, lying on the earth. The titans, and I also, are eager to slay Dasaratha's son ; this should fill thee with confidence, how is it that thou art still trembling, O Irreproachable Hero? Should he slay me, Raghava will assuredly slay thee also but I have nothing to fear, O Lord of the Titans! Now command me, O Scourge of Thy Foes, do not seek another for this encounter, O Incomparable Hero! I shall destroy thy foes despite their strength! Even were it Shakra or Yama or Pavaka or Maruta, I should enter into combat with them or with Kuvera or Varuna themselves ; I, who in stature am like unto a mountain, with a sharpened spear as my weapon, my war-cry, my pointed teeth, at the sight of which Purandara himself trembles, throwing away my arms, shall strike down the foe with blows of my fists. None will be able to withstand me, no matter how much they may cling to life, nor have I need of lance, mace, sword or whetted dart ; with my bare hands alone, I will kill Raghava, were he accompanied by the God who bears the Thunderbolt himself! If he is able to withstand the force of my fists then mine arrows will drink his life's blood! O King, I stand here, why art thou overwhelmed with despair? Here I wait ready to exterminate the slayers of titans, by whom Lanka has been set on fire, and also the monkeys, in the struggle that is about to take place. I shall confer a rare and great glory upon thee! Did the danger come from Indra or Swyambhu or the Gods themselves, I should make them measure their length on the field of battle, O King! I shall overcome Yama, consume Pavaka, hurl down Varuna, pulverize the mountains and shatter the earth! After my long sleep, let those beings I am about to consume, witness the prowess of Kumbhakarna this day! Nay, the Three Worlds shall not be able to glut mine appetite! In order to please thee I will slay the son of Dasaratha! Having struck down Rama and Lakshmana, I shall devour all the foremost of the monkey leaders. Rejoice therefore, O King and drink wine, do what thou hast to do and banish grief; to-day I shall send Rama to the abode of death and Sita will become thine for ever!"

CHAPTER 64

Mahodara's Speech

HEARING this speech of the colossal and valiant Kumbhakarna, Mahodara replied :—

" Kumbhakarna, thou art an offshoot of an illustrious race, thou art courageous but thou hast two vulgar characteristics and, in thy conceit, art unable to anticipate the course of events in all its aspects.

" It is not true that the king does not understand what is politic and impolitic, O Kumbhakarna, but thou, in thy youthful impetuosity, knowest only how to prate! The Lord of the Titans, who is conversant with the laws of time and place, is also aware of increase and loss as well as our situation and the state of the enemy.

" What man of sense would attempt that which an old thick-headed soldier with no respect even for his elders plumes himself on accomplishing? When thou dost assert that duty, profit and pleasure are essentially opposed to each other, it is a proof that thou art unaware of their real nature. Action is undoubtedly the source of all experiences and here below, happiness is the fruit we seek even in our most evil acts. Apart from pleasure, duty and profit yield felicity, but the fruit reaped from injustice and unrighteousness is calamitous. Men of strong character undertake those acts, the consequences of which they reap in another world, whilst those who give themselves up to the pursuit of pleasure reap the consequences here.

" Why should that which the king has so much at heart and which we approve, namely the chastising of his enemies, be set aside in any way? As for the motives thou hast given for marching against Rama single-handed, I will point out to thee what is ill-considered and reprehensible about them! How canst thou defeat Rama alone, he who formerly destroyed innumerable exceedingly powerful titans in Janasthana? Those rangers of the night whom he overcame in Janasthana were valiant warriors also and dost thou not behold them in the city,

stricken with fear? By rousing Rama, the son of Dasaratha, who resembles a wounded lion, alas thou art waking a sleeping serpent! Burning with valour and unapproachable in his fury, inaccessible as Mrityu, who would dare to challenge him? This entire army cannot face that foe without being imperilled, therefore it in no wise recommends itself to me that thou shouldst go out to meet him alone, O Child. Who, bereft of resources would be eager to meet with an adversary, ready to sacrifice his life and furnished with every pre-requisite! Rama has no equal among men, O Best of the Titans, how canst thou plume thyself on entering into combat with him who is the rival of Indra and Vaivasvata?"

Having spoken thus to the enraged Kumbhakarna, Mahodara said to Ravana, the Destroyer of the Worlds, who was surrounded by the titans:—

"Having formerly borne Vaidehi away, why dost thou delay? If thou desirest Sita to submit to thy will, I see a means of bringing her to thy feet. If it pleases thee, O Indra among the Titans, then hear me!

"Let it be proclaimed that I, Dvijihva, Samhradin, Kumbhakarna and Vitadarna, all five, are going forth to slay Rama! We shall engage him in a fierce struggle and, if we triumph over thine enemy, we need resort to no other means, but, if thy rival survive and we escape from the fight, then we will adopt the measures I have planned.

"We shall return from the battlefield and come hither covered with blood, our limbs pierced by darts on which are engraved Rama's name, and relate how we have destroyed Raghava and Lakshmana! Thereafter we shall press thy feet and thou wilt cover us with honour, after which, mounted on an elephant thou wilt publish the tidings throughout the city, relating how Rama, his brother and his army were entirely destroyed. Simulating an extreme satisfaction, O Subduer of Thy Foes, thou wilt promote feasting and rejoicing and bestow gold and slaves on thy servants and distribute garlands, raiment and perfumes on thy warriors, thou thyself manifesting thy delight by drinking. Thereupon a rumour will spread everywhere that Rama and his friends have been devoured by the titans; such will be the report!

"Then shalt thou repair secretly to where Sita is, in order to offer her consolation and tempt her with grain, diamonds and entertainment in order to seduce her. By this deceit, O King, Sita's grief will be increased and she, bereft of felicity, without a protector, will accede to thy desire. Learning that her charming lord is slain, Sita, in despair and on account of womanly frailty, will submit to thy will!

"Brought up in the lap of prosperity, this woman who is worthy of felicity and who is afflicted with misfortune, realising her happiness depends on thee, will surrender herself wholly to thee.

"This is the best course for thee to follow. Even to behold Rama may prove disastrous; have no anxiety! Great happiness awaits thee here without entering into combat! Neither losing thy forces nor courting danger, triumph over thine enemy, O Monarch! Glory, felicity, prosperity and renown will long be the lot of thy sovereign majesty!"

CHAPTER 65

Kumbhakarna enters into Combat

REPLYING to Mahodara's reproaches, Kumbhakarna said to his brother, Ravana, the King of the Titans:—

"Forsooth I shall dispel the immediate peril this day by slaying that wretch, Rama! Freed from thine adversary, be happy! Heroes do not thunder in vain like clouds bereft of rain! Do thou mark how my threats find fulfilment in mine exploits! Warriors do not need to boast, and accomplish the most difficult of feats without bluster! Cowardly monarchs, devoid of intelligence, who plume themselves on being wise, will ever find thy speech acceptable, O Mahodara!

"All you effeminate creatures, agreeable talkers, who flatter the king, have always ruined any martial enterprise. Nothing is left in Lanka save its sovereign; its wealth is exhausted, its army destroyed and that monarch is beset by foes in the guise of friends! I shall go out and fight, determined to triumph

over the foe and, in this wise, redeem thy calamitous policy in this great struggle."

Hearing these words of the intelligent Kumbharkarna, the King of the Titans answered laughing :—

" In sooth, Rama has terrorized Mahodara ! Assuredly he does not relish battle, O Dear Friend ! O Sagacious Warrior, I have none equal to thee in devotion and prowess ; go, slay mine adversary, O Kumbhakarna and speed towards victory !

"Thou wast sleeping and it was for mine enemy's destruction that I had thee wakened ; this hour is of extreme significance to the titans, O Vanquisher of thy Foes ! Go, arm thyself ; let those two princes, the equals of Aditya in splendour, be thy pasture ! Beholding thee, the monkeys will take to flight and the hearts of Rama and Lakshmana will cease to beat."

Having spoken thus to the exceedingly powerful Kumbhakarna, that illustrious lion of the titans felt he had received new life. Aware of Kumbhakarna's prowess and knowing his valour, the king expanded with joy like unto the immaculate moon.

Hearing his words, which filled him with delight, that warrior went away and, having listened to the king's speech, prepared for battle. Then that scourge of his foes vigorously brandished his iron spear decorated with fine gold that shone brightly and was as renowned as Indra's thunderbolt and equally heavy. The scourge of the Devas, Danavas, Gandharvas, Yakshas and Pannagas, wreathed in garlands, festooned with crimson flowers, emitting flames, that great spear, stained with the blood of his enemies, was taken up by the illustrious Kumbhakarna, who addressed Ravana, saying :—

" I shall set out alone ; let thy powerful army remain here ! To-day in mine hunger and fury, I shall devour the monkeys ! "

At these words of Kumbhakarna, Ravana answered :—

" Do thou go out accompanied by troops furnished with picks and hammers ; those monkeys are brave and exceedingly energetic ! He who is rash enough to meet them alone will be torn to pieces by their teeth, yet, though they are extremely difficult to overcome, surround thyself with warriors and setting out, utterly destroy that enemy host so fatal to the titans ! "

Thereafter, descending from the throne, the mighty Ravana placed a diadem, the interior of which was encrusted with

pearls, on Kumbhakarna's brow and decked out that hero with bracelets, rings, precious gems and a necklace as bright as the moon, covering his limbs with celestial and fragrant garlands and setting earrings in his ears. With the bracelets, anklets and golden coins[1], with which he was adorned, the large-eyed Kumbhakarna shone like the sacrificial fire.

Resplendent with his great dark-blue girdle, he resembled the Mandara Mountain encircled by the snake at the time of the churning of the water of immortality. Clad in golden armour that no arrow could penetrate, which in its natural brilliance seemed to project flames, he was rendered as radiant as the King of the Mountains encircled by evening clouds. His entire body was covered with ornaments of every kind and, spear in hand, that titan called to mind Narayana, when, in his might, he took the three strides.

Thereafter that warrior embraced his brother and paid obeisance to him by circumambulating him in the traditional manner and, inclining his head to him, set out to the sound of conches and gongs.

Then Ravana, dismissing him with good wishes, caused an escort of well-equipped soldiers to accompany him with elephants, horses and chariots, emitting a sound like thunder-clouds. Valiant fighters accompanied that prince of warriors mounted on serpents, buffalo, donkeys, lions, elephants antelopes and birds.

It was under a prodigious shower of blossom, a parasol over him, bearing a pointed spear in his hand, full of daring, that the enemy of Devas and Danavas, intoxicated with the smell of blood, set forth. And innumerable titans followed him on foot, full of energy and prowess, fierce of aspect, bearing weapons in their hands, their eyes red; and their ranks measured many leagues in extent and they resembled heaps of antimony and brandished maces, swords, sharp axes, javelins, bars, ramrods, hammers, great Sala Trees and were furnished with nets.

Meanwhile Kumbhakarna, assuming another terrible and ferocious form, advanced impetuously, measuring a hundred bows in breadth and six hundred in height, formidable, full of power and energy with eyes like unto chariot wheels. And,

[1] Lit. Nishkas—See glossary.

having assembled the titans, that colossus with his large mouth, who looked like a flaming crag said with a mocking laugh :—

"To-day the foremost of the monkey divisions will be consumed by me in my wrath one after the other like moths in a flame. Yet those inhabitants of the woods have never given offence and their race adorns the gardens of our dwellings.

"The cause of the city being beseiged is Raghava, and Lakshmana who accompanies him ; he being slain, all will be slain ; I shall therefore destroy him in fight."

At these words of Kumbhakarna, the titans emitted a great shout that seemed to agitate the ocean.

Then the crafty Kumbhakarna went forth and sinister portents appeared on every side ; dark and fearful clouds accompanied by meteors were seen, and the earth, the sea and the forests trembled. Jackals of ferocious aspect, with flames darting from their mouths, began to howl and birds wheeled from left to right. A vulture alighted on the titan's spear as he advanced, and his left eye and arm twitched ; a flaming meteor fell with a terrible crash ; the sun lost its brilliance and no favourable wind blew.

Without heeding these threatening portents, causing the hair to stand on end, Kumbhakarna set out, urged on by the force of destiny. Having crossed the ramparts, that giant, equal to a mountain, beheld the vast army of the monkeys resembling a cloud and, seeing that most powerful of the titans, as high as a mountain, those monkeys fled in all directions, like clouds driven before the wind. At the sight of that tremendous host of monkeys scattering to the four quarters like a mass of cloud melting away, Kumbhakarna joyfully redoubled his shouts resembling thunder.

Hearing those terrible shouts, like unto the roar of clouds in the sky, countless Plavagas fell to the earth like great Sala Trees whose roots have been severed and, as Kumbhakarna hurled himself on the enemy with his huge mace in order to destroy him, he filled the ranks of the monkeys with extreme fear as does the Lord of Death accompanied by his minions at the end of the World Period.

CHAPTER 66

Angada reproaches the Monkeys for flying from Kumbhakarna

HAVING leapt over the wall, Kumbhakarna, that giant, like unto the peak of a mountain, full of valour, set out from the city in haste and emitted a great shout which agitated the waters, drowned the thunder claps and appeared to shatter the mountains.

Seeing that warrior of fierce glance, as invincible as Maghavat, Yama or Varuna, the monkeys stampeded, and Prince Angada, beholding them fleeing, addressed the mighty Nala, Nila, Gavaksha and Kumuda, saying :—

" Forgetting your native valour and noble lineage, where are you fleeing in terror like common monkeys ? Come back, O Companions, return ! Is it thus that you defend your lives ? Nay, this titan is not able to fight against you all ; he is here to create panic amongst you. This great fear, that the titan inspires in you, will be dispelled by our prowess ; return, O Plavamgamas ! "

Rallied with difficulty from here and there and re-assured, those monkeys, armed with trees, halted in the field, and those dwellers in the woods stayed there ready to advance in fury on Kumbhakarna, like elephants intoxicated with Mada juice. Thereafter they attacked him valiantly with blows from mountain peaks, rocks and trees with their flowering crests but were unable to overthrow him. Innumerable stones, and trees with blossoming tops fell shattered on the earth, having come in contact with his limbs and that hero, enraged, on his side, struck down the ranks of those energetic monkeys by exercising his great strength, like unto a fire which suddenly blazes forth in the forest. Their limbs be-spattered with blood, those lions among the monkeys, overcome and cut down, lay there in great numbers resembling trees with coppery flowers. Thereafter, those monkeys bounded away without looking in which direction and some threw themselves into the sea and some leapt into the

air. Overcome by that titan, who was disporting himself, some, despite their valour, fled over the sea by the way by which they had come and some, pale and distraught, escaped to the valleys. The bears climbed into the trees and some took refuge in the mountains; others being no longer able to stand, fell down and remained lying on the earth insensible as if asleep or dead.

Seeing the monkeys routed, Angada called out to them:—

"Stay! Let us fight! Return, O Plavamgamas! Were you to range the whole earth in your flight I see no refuge for you anywhere! Why do you seek to preserve your lives? If you fly, leaving your weapons, lest they impede your course, your wives will deride you for this cowardice, which is death to men of honour, O Warriors! Whither are you fleeing filled with fear like common monkeys, you who are born in rich and illustrious families? Where are those deeds of valour and prowess of which you boasted in the assembly? The reproach of cowardice will be heard by you; he, who seeks to save his life by fleeing, is despised! Follow the path chosen by men of courage and overcome your fears. If, after a brief existence, you lie stretched on the earth dead, you will attain Brahmaloka, inaccessible to cowards. We shall acquire glory by striking down the foe in fight and, if we succumb, we shall enjoy the treasures of heaven in the region of heroes, O Monkeys! Nay, Kumbhakarna will never return alive, having come before Kakutstha, as a moth that draws near to a glowing brazier. If one, despite our numbers, is able to disperse us and we preserve our lives by fleeing, then there is an end to our renown!"

Such was Angada's speech, he of the golden bracelets, and the fugitives replied to that hero's reproaches, saying:—

"That Titan Kumbhakarna, has caused a terrible carnage amongst us; it is not the moment to stay; life is dear to us!"

With these words the leaders of the monkeys, beholding that giant of fearful glance advancing, scattered in all directions.

Nevertheless Angada, by his exhortations and arguments, succeeded in rallying them and, re-assured by that sagacious son of Bali, they submitted to his commands and those foremost of monkeys returned to the field.

CHAPTER 67

Kumbhakarna's Exploits. He is slain by Rama

RETRACING their steps on hearing the voice of Angada, all those huge-bodied monkeys, resolutely taking their stand, desired nothing more than to join issue in the fight.

Their confidence restored by the words of the valiant Angada, those monkeys, feeling their energy revived and their courage mounting, advanced, resolving to die and sacrifice their lives. Then those giants, arming themselves with trees and enormous crags, which they spun with great rapidity, hurled themselves on Kumbhakarna, whereupon, full of ire and vigour, that warrior of immense stature, brandishing his mace, dispersed the enemy on every side. Seven hundred and eight thousand monkeys lay scattered on the earth struck down by Kumbhakarna and, like unto Garuda consuming serpents, he seized hold of seven, eight, ten, twenty and thirty in his arms, crushing and devouring them in his extreme fury as he ran.

Re-assured with exceeding difficulty, those monkeys rallied here and there and, armed with trees and rocks, took up their stand in the forefront of the battle. At that instant, Dvivida, that lion among monkeys, resembling a threatening cloud, tearing up a rock, hurled himself on the enemy who was like unto a mountain peak; and that monkey, breaking off the crag, flung it at Kumbhakarna, missing him, so that the missile fell on the titan force, crushing horses, elephants and chariots harnessed to excellent steeds. Another rock created further victims and, under that avalanche of stones, the titans wounded, their horses slain, their charioteers struck down, streaming with blood and mounted in theii cars, suddenly let forth terrible cries and with the aid of death-dealing arrows, severed the heads of those foremost of monkeys who were roaring.

On their side, the monkeys, full of valour, uprooted great trees in order to crush the chariots, horses, elephants, buffalo and titans and, from the air where he was stationed, Hanuman

showered rocks, stones and trees of every kind on the head of Kumbhakarna but that mighty one split and evaded that rain of trees. And he hurled himself upon that great army of monkeys brandishing his sharp pick and, as he rushed forward Hanuman placed himself in the way armed with the peak of a mountain, and, in fury struck Kumbhakarna a violent blow, who, in his appalling corpulence, appeared like a hill! Then he whose limbs were dripping with fat and streaming with blood, stumbled under the shock and the titan hurled his spear, which was as bright as lightning and like a mountain spouting forth flames, striking Maruti between the arms, as Guha formerly struck the Krauncha Mountain with his formidable lance. His breast pierced by that spear, beside himself, vomiting blood, Hanuman, in fury, let forth a terrible cry in the midst of the battle, like the roar of a thundercloud at the end of the World Period, and a great cheer arose from the ranks of the titans as they beheld his plight, whilst the monkeys, distraught and terrified, fled from the field.

At that instant, summoning up his courage, the valiant Nila discharged a crag against that crafty titan, who, seeing it approaching, struck it with his fist and, on the impact, that rock broke and fell on the earth emitting sparks of fire. Then Rishabha, Sharabha, Nila, Gavaksha and Gandamadhana, those five tigers among the monkeys, hurled themselves on Kumbhakarna and, in the struggle, showered him with blows from stones, trees, the palms of their hands, feet and fists, attacking that giant on every side. Kumbhakarna, however, scarcely felt those blows and, unheeding, seized the impetuous Rishabha in his two arms. Crushed in this embrace, that bull among the monkeys fell to the ground, his mouth filled with blood.

Thereafter, in the fight, that enemy of Indra struck Sharabha with his fist, Nila with his knee and Gavaksha with the palm of his hand. Dazed by the blows they had received, terrified, covered with blood, they fell on the earth like Kimshuka Trees that have been uprooted. Those powerful leaders of the monkeys being overcome, the rest hurled themselves in thousands on Kumbhakarna and, flinging themselves upon him and climbing about him as if he were a rock, those bulls among the

Plavagas, who themselves resembled hills, attacked and bit him. With their nails, teeth, fists and arms, those foremost of monkeys assailed the valiant Kumbhakarna, a veritable tiger in stature, and that titan, covered by thousands of apes, resembled a mountain overgrown by trees. Crushing all those monkeys in his arms, that giant devoured them, as Garuda the serpents. Cast into Kumbhakarna's mouth, that resembled the pit of hell, the monkeys issued from his ears and nostrils. As high as a mountain in his rage he devoured those monkeys, and that prince of titans crushed them covering the earth with their flesh and blood and ranging through their ranks which he overran, so that he appeared like the Fire of Time itself. Resembling Shakra bearing the thunderbolt in his hand or Death with the noose, so did that powerful titan appear, armed with his spear, in the fight. As in the summer season, fire destroys the dry forests, so did Kumbhakarna consume the simian ranks.

Thus decimated, their leaders struck down, the Plavamgamas, wild with terror, emitted dreadful cries and, overpowered again and again by Kumbhakarna, those monkeys fled for refuge to Raghava. Witnessing the massacre of those monkeys, Angada, born of the son of the Bearer of the Thunderbolt, hurled himself in rage upon Kumbhakarna in the struggle. Seizing hold of a great crag, he roared again and again, putting all the titans, who accompanied Kumbhakarna, to flight; thereafter he struck the head of his adversary with the rock, and that enemy of Indra inflamed with anger on receiving the blow, leapt with one bound upon the irascible son of Bali. Emitting loud cries, that titan struck terror among the monkeys and, in his anger, threw his spear with extreme force at Angada, but with a light bound, that valiant lion among the monkeys, an experienced warrior, avoided the impact and leapt on his opponent, striking his chest with the palm of his hand. That violent blow dazed the giant, who resembled a mountain, but regaining his senses that most powerful of titans, doubling his fist, with a mocking laugh, struck, Angada who fell insensible to the earth.

As that lion among the Plavagas lay stretched unconscious on the ground, Kumbhakarna, brandishing his spear, rushed on Sugriva and, seeing that colossus running towards him, the

courageous King of the Monkeys went out to meet him whereupon, beholding that Indra among the Monkeys advancing, Kumbhakarna halted and stood facing him with braced limbs.

Beholding Kumbhakarna standing still, his body streaming with the blood of the great monkeys whom he had devoured, Sugriva said to him :—

" In slaying these warriors thou hast accomplished a most difficult feat and, by devouring my soldiers, hast acquired immense renown ; now let the army of monkeys be, what hast thou to do with common folk ? Do thou seek to bear the weight of this rock I am about to hurl on thee, O Titan ! Find thy satisfaction in slaying me, O Titan, thou who resemblest a mountain ! "

At these words of the King of the Monkeys, who was possessed of courage and fortitude, that lion among the titans, answered :—

" Thou art the grandson of Prajapati and the son of Riksharajas, thou art energetic and brave, hence thine arrogance, O Monkey ! "

At these words of Kumbhakarna, Sugriva, taking up a stone, hurled it at him suddenly and struck his breast with that missile resembling a thunderbolt. The rock broke on the huge chest of that giant and the titans were appalled, whilst from the ranks of the monkeys rose shouts of joy. Struck by that rocky peak, Kumbhakarna, enraged, roared ; opening his huge mouth wide and brandishing his spear, that resembled lightning, he hurled it at the King of the Monkeys and the Bears in order to slay him. As it fell, the son of Anila, Hanuman, with his two hands seized hold of that sharp spear and its gold-encircled shaft loosed by the titan's arm and, in play as it were, broke that powerful weapon across his knee.

Seeing his lance shattered to pieces by Hanuman, the army of monkeys, in a transport of delight, began to cheer. Meanwhile hearing those rangers of the woods emitting leonine roars and lauding Maruti in their joy, on beholding his spear shattered, that titan became enraged and, pale with fear, tore off a peak of the Malaya Mountain nearby, in the vicinity of Lanka, hurling it on Sugriva in order to strike him down. Struck by that crag, the Indra of the Monkeys fell on the earth insensible and the Yatudhanas let forth a roar of triumph.

Thereafter Kumbhakarna, approaching that powerful King of the Monkeys, lifted him up and bore him away like unto a violent wind driving away a cloud and, as he ranged the battlefield dragging Sugriva with him, who resembled a great cloud, Kumbhakarna, with his lofty stature, appeared like Mount Meru of exceedingly high peaks. Having laid hold of Sugriva, the mighty Lord of the Titans turned towards Lanka amidst the acclamations of his own people and the wailing of the Inhabitants of the Celestial Region, who were inconsolable on account of the capture of the King of the Plavamgamas and, having overcome the King of the Monkeys, that enemy of Indra and his rival in power, reflected :—' He being dead, the entire simian host is destroyed together with Raghava ! '

Then Hanuman, the sagacious son of Maruta, seeing Sugriva borne away by Kumbhakarna and the monkeys fleeing, thought to himself: ' Now that Sugriva has been made captive what ought I to do ? Assuredly I shall accomplish that which is fitting ; in order to slay this titan, I shall assume the shape of a mountain ! When I have destroyed the extremely powerful Kumbhakarna in combat by pounding his body with blows and have delivered the king, the delight of the monkeys will be general ! Yet that great monkey is well able to free himself though meseems, that, struck by Kumbhakarna with a rock in the struggle, the Chief of the Monkeys is not yet conscious of his plight. Presently, when Sugriva recovers consciousness, he will know how to save himself and the monkeys in this great conflict. That warrior will not be pleased if I deliver him, for his fair name would be tarnished and irretrievably lost. That is why I shall delay a while so that he may extricate himself from this predicament by his own prowess and I shall confine myself to rallying the scattered forces.'

Reflecting thus, Hanuman, born of Maruta, sought to instil courage into the simian army.

Meanwhile, bearing the great and quivering form of the monkey in his arms, Kumbhakarna returned to Lanka, and from the temples, highways, dwellings and city gates, the people honoured him with a rain of flowers. Under the shower of roasted grain and the fragrance of the blossoms with which he was drenched and also on account of the coolness of the royal

highway, little by little the valiant Sugriva recovered consciousness. Borne in the arms of his powerful rival and, beholding the great highway of the city, that warrior was assailed by innumerable thoughts—' Taken captive in this way, what can I do now? I shall act in such a way that it is to the advantage of the monkeys.'

Then with his sharp nails, the King of the Monkeys, instantly attacked the enemy of the Gods and tore off his two ears with his teeth, biting off his nose and splitting his thighs with his feet.

With his nose and ears torn off by Sugriva's teeth and nails, Kumbhakarna, transported with anger, his limbs covered with blood, threw the monkey down in order to crush him. Flung to the ground with fearful violence and struck by the Enemy of the Gods, Sugriva bounced into the air like a ball and with all speed flew to rejoin Rama.

Kumbhakarna, his ears and nose severed, drenched in gore, shone like a mountain with its torrents and, covered with blood, vomiting blood, that gigantic titan of fearful aspect, the younger brother of Ravana, blazed with anger. Like unto a mass of dark collyrium or an evening cloud, that formidable Ranger of the Night resolved to enter into combat once more and, Sugriva having escaped, that enemy of Indra, furious, immediately threw himself into the struggle but reflecting ' I have no weapon ' that ferocious warrior seized hold of a huge hammer. Issuing from the city, the valiant titan began to consume the redoubtable army of the monkeys with the violence of Fire at the destruction of the worlds. Famished and avid for flesh, Kumbhakarna entered the ranks of the monkeys and, in his rage, like unto Mrityu at the end of the world period, indiscriminately ate up titan, monkey, Pisacha and bear. Thereafter in his fury, he consumed the monkeys, seizing one, two, three or more in one hand and titans also, thrusting them greedily into his mouth so that he streamed with flesh and blood and, though struck by the peaks of mountains, continued to feast on those monkeys, whilst they, seeing their companions being devoured, took refuge with Rama, whereupon Kumbhakarna, in a transport of rage, pursued them in order to consume them. Seizing them in his arms, in the chase, he took hold of them in groups of seven, eight, twenty, thirty and

a hundred; his limbs were covered with fat, flesh and blood, while wreaths of tangled entrails hung over his ears, and that colossus, of sharp teeth, began to discharge his weapons so that he appeared like Time at the end of the world.

At that instant, the son of Sumitra, the scourge of enemy hosts and the destroyer of hostile citadels, enraged, entered the fight and the courageous Lakshmana loosed seven darts into Kumbhakarna's body, aiming a hail of other missiles on him but Kumbhakarna shook off those falling shafts. Then the valiant son of Sumitra was provoked beyond measure and covered the shining armour of that titan, that was made of gold, with his shafts, as a mountain is overlaid with clouds by the wind at evening. Like unto a mass of dark collyrium, that titan, riddled with golden darts, blazed like the sun shining amidst the clouds. And that terrible monster, whose voice equalled the crash of countless thunder-clouds, spoke scornfully, increasing Saumitri's delight, saying:—

"Thou hast manifested thy courage by entering into combat. fearlessly with me, I who have overcome Antaka himself without difficulty in the field! He who is able to face the rival of Mrityu himself, armed for combat, is worthy of honour, how much more so if he should enter into conflict with him! Mounted on Airavata surrounded by the Gods, Shakra, their king, has never dared to challenge me to battle. This courage from a youth is gratifying to me; now go hence, O Saumitri, I wish to meet Raghava!

"In sooth thy valour, energy and martial prowess are pleasing to me but my only desire is to slay Rama, when he is slain, all are slain! When Rama has fallen under my blows, I shall fight with all my might against all those who remain on the battlefield!"

Thus boastfully did the titan speak and Saumitri, with a mocking smile, answered in dread accents saying:—

"That thy prowess renders thee invincible to Shakra and the other Gods is true, O Warrior, and to-day thou dost manifest the same valour! Yonder is the son of Dasaratha immoveable as a rock!"

Hearing these words, that ranger of the night, the mighty and powerful Kumbhakarna, disregarding Lakshmana, passed him by and, causing the earth to tremble, rushed on Rama.

The son of Dasaratha, Rama, however, loosed some pointed arrows with Indra's weapon on Kumbhakarna's breast and, wounded by Rama in his furious course, flames mixed with embers shot from his mouth! Pierced by Rama's arrow, that lion among the titans, emitting a terrible cry, hurled himself full of rage upon Raghava, throwing off the monkeys. With his breast pierced with darts, adorned with peacock's plumes, his mace fell shattered from his hand and all his weapons were scattered on the earth. Finding himself disarmed, that colossus created a great carnage with his fists and hands.[1] Covered with blood, that streamed from his wounds, like a torrent falling from a mountain, his limbs riddled with arrows, maddened by the smell of blood, he rushed about in his violent rage devouring the monkeys, titans and bears. Brandishing a huge crag, that mighty and formidable giant, the equal of Antaka, hurled it at Rama but before it reached him, that hero struck it in the centre with the aid of seven infallible darts.

The virtuous Rama, elder brother of Bharata, shattered it with arrows encrusted with gold and, like unto the peak of Meru, that crag, shining with splendour, fell, crushing two hundred monkeys.

At that instant, the virtuous Lakshmana, after reflecting deeply on the various means of destroying Kumbhakarna, said to Rama:

"O Prince, that monster is no longer able to distinguish between monkeys and titans; drunk with the smell of blood, he devours friends and foes alike! Let the foremost of the monkeys climb upon him courageously and let their officers and leaders hang upon him on every side; under the heavy load that will crush him as he is rushing over the ground, that insensate one will annihilate the titans and not the monkeys."

At these words of that intelligent prince, the valiant monkeys all flung themselves on Kumbhakarna with alacrity and he, full of ire against the monkeys, who had climbed on his back, shook them violently as a fierce elephant his keepers. Seeing the titan shaking himself thus, Rama said to himself: 'He is incensed' and rushed upon him with his excellent bow. His eyes red with anger, the intrepid Raghava, consuming him with his glance as

[1] He having many arms.

it were, bounded quickly forward, re-assuring the leaders, who were tormenting the mighty Kumbhakarna and, in order to encourage the monkeys, taking hold of his great bow encrusted with gold, that with its cord resembled a serpent, Rama advanced with his huge quiver full of arrows.

Surrounded by the monkey host, that warrior went forward full of valour, followed by Lakshmana and he beheld the illustrious and mighty Kumbhakarna, the vanquisher of his foes, surrounded by titans, his eyes inflamed, adorned with golden bracelets, pursuing all those monkeys with fury like unto one of the elephants of the four quarters; and he resembled the Vindhya or Mandara Mountains and was vomiting blood like a great cloud pouring down rain. With his tongue he licked the corners of his mouth that were wet with blood while he continued to destroy the simian army like Death at the end of the world.

Beholding that Prince of the Titans shining like a glowing brazier, that lion among men stretched his bow, and the sound of that weapon infuriated that foremost of the titans, who, highly provoked, hurled himself on Raghava.

Meanwhile Rama, whose arms were like unto the great coils of the King of the Serpents, said to Kumbhakarna who, possessing the splendour of a mountain, was rushing to attack him like a cloud driven by the tempest :—

" Come, O Prince of the Titans, tremble not, I await thee bow in hand and in an instant will deprive thee of life ! "

' It is Rama ! ' reflected Kumbhakarna and, bursting forth into hideous laughter, rushed forward in fury, scattering the monkeys on the battlefield. By his monstrous and terrible laughter, like unto the muttering of a thundercloud, he seemed to cleave the hearts of the inhabitants of the woods, and Kumbhakarna, in his great splendour, said to Raghava :—

" Take me not for Viradha, Kabanda or Khara, Bali or Maricha ; it is I, Kumbhakarna, who stand here ! Behold my dreadful and mighty mace wrought of iron ; with this, Devas and Danavas were formerly struck down by me ! Do not hold me in contempt in that I possess neither nose nor ears, I do not feel the least discomfort or pain on account of their loss ! Manifest the strength of thy limbs, O Tiger among the Ikshvakus;

having displayed thy prowess and might, I shall devour thee, O *Irreproachable Prince!*"

Hearing him speak thus, Rama loosed one of his plumed arrows at Kumbhakarna that struck him with the force of lightning but that enemy of the Gods was neither shaken nor moved and those shafts, which had pierced seven Sala Trees and slain that bull among the monkeys, Bali, cut into the body of the titan that was as hard as a diamond.

Then, as though they were drops of water, that enemy of the mighty Indra, drank up those arrows through his body, thus quenching their fury, whilst he whirled his mace in a fine frenzy. And that weapon covered with blood, the terror of the celestial hosts, brandished by that titan with formidable energy, created panic in the simian ranks.

Then Rama, taking up another arrow named the Vayavya,[1] loosed it against that ranger of the night and cut off the arm with which he held the mace. With his arm severed, he let out a terrible cry and his arm, cut off by Raghava's shaft, fell with its mace, like unto the peak of a mountain on the army of the King of the Monkeys, crushing it. Thereafter, beside themselves, the monkeys who had escaped the massacre caused by that fall, their limbs lacerated, took refuge in the vicinity and became the witnesses of the terrific struggle between that Indra among men and the Prince of the Titans.

His arm severed by that arrow, Kumbhakarna resembling the King of the Mountains its peak cloven by a great sword, struck down a tree with his remaining hand and rushed upon that lord of men, but Rama, with a shaft decorated with gold joined to Indra's weapon, cut off his upraised arm like the coiled body of a snake and the Tala Tree also.

Beholding the titan with two arms severed who, roaring, was rushing upon him, Rama took out two whetted and crescent-shaped arrows and severed his two feet, whereupon the intermediary regions, the four quarters, the caves of the mountain, the vast ocean, the City of Lanka and the ranks of the monkeys resounded with the thunder of his fall.

His arms and legs severed, that titan opened his mouth like Vadavamukha and suddenly rushed howling on Rama like

[1] Vayu's weapon. See glossary of weapons.

Rahu on the moon in the sky. Thereupon Rama filled his mouth with steel-pointed and plumed shafts decorated with gold and, with his mouth thus filled, he was unable to speak and, emitting inarticulated sounds with extreme difficulty, fell senseless.

Thereupon Rama selected an arrow bright as the rays of the sun, which resembled the Rod of Brahma at the time of the final dissolution and was fatal to his foes, the weapon of Indra, well-plumed and sharpened, the rival of Maruta in speed, and Rama discharged that arrow, the shaft of which was admirably inlaid with diamonds and gold, brilliant as the flames of a blazing sun, swift as Mahendra's thunderbolt, against that ranger of the night.

Loosed from Raghava's arm, that missile, which lit up the ten regions with its brilliance and which, in its formidable aspect, resembled a smokeless flame, struck that Prince of the Titans, the equal of Shakra and severed his head with its prominent teeth and swinging earrings, like unto the peak of a high mountain, as formerly Purandara severed the head of Vritra. The enormous head of Kumbhakarna with the curls that adorned it, looked like the moon floating in the sky at the time of the sun's rising, when the night has passed. Severed by Rama's shafts, the head of the titan resembling a mountain, fell on the earth crushing the highways, residences, gates and edifices of the city, bearing down the high walls also ; and that gigantic body of great resplendence belonging to the titan, fell into the sea where it crushed the great sharks, huge fishes and serpents, and plunged into the depths below.

When Kumbhakarna, that great enemy of the brahmins and the Gods, was slain in combat, the earth shook as all the mountains also and the Celestials shouted for joy. Thereafter Gods, Rishis, Maharishis, Pannagas, Suras, Bhutas, Suparnas, Guhyakas and the hosts of Yakshas and Gandharvas, who ranged the skies, loudly extolled Rama's exploit.

But on beholding that valiant Prince of the House of Raghu, the adherents and kinsfolk of the Lord of the Nairritas emitted loud cries at Kumbhakarna's fall, as do elephants in the presence of a lion. Having overcome Kumbhakarna in the field, Rama, amidst the simian host, resembled the sun emerging from the

jaws of Rahu when it drives away the darkness from the celestial region.

In their delight, the countless monkeys, whose faces resembled opening lotuses, lauded Prince Raghava, who saw the fulfilment of his desires in the death of his formidable adversary, and the elder brother of Bharata rejoiced that he had slain Kumbhakarna, the Scourge of the Gods, who had never been overcome in any great encounter, as the King of the Celestials rejoiced at the death of the great Asura, Vritra.

CHAPTER 68

Ravana weeps for Kumbhakarna

SEEING Kumbhakarna fall under the blows of the exceedingly courageous Raghava, the titans brought the tidings to their King, Ravana, and said :—

" O King, the rival of Kala is dead! Having overthrown the monkey ranks and devoured the Plavagas, he, for a space, displayed his prowess which has now been extinguished by Rama's unconquerable strength and half his body lies submerged in the vast ocean. Streaming with blood, his nose and ears severed, his head obstructing Lanka's gateway, he who resembled a mountain, Kumbhakarna, thy brother, struck down by Kakutstha's arrow, is now but a naked and mutilated corpse, like unto a tree consumed by fire ! "

Hearing this report of the mighty Kumbhakarna's death on the battlefield, Ravana, overwhelmed with distress, swooned away.

Learning that their paternal uncle had been slain, Devantaka, Narantaka, Trishiras and Atikaya, a prey to grief, groaned aloud, and Mahodara and Mahaparshwa, on hearing that their brother had perished under the blows of Rama of imperishable exploits, were seized with anguish.

Thereafter, regaining his senses with extreme difficulty, that lion among the titans, tormented by the death of Kumbhakarna, his senses troubled, began to lament, saying :—

" O Hero, O Humbler of the pride of thy foes, O Mighty Kumbhakarna, urged on by destiny, thou hast left me for the

abode of death! To go whither hast thou deserted me without having extracted that thorn from my side or from the side of my kinsfolk? O Thou powerful warrior, destroyer of hostile ranks, from henceforth I no longer exist since I have lost my right arm, the support that delivered me from the fear of the Gods and Asuras. How has such a warrior, who quelled the pride of the Gods and Danavas, who resembled the Fire of Time, fallen to-day in the fight with Raghava? How has Rama been able, with a single arrow, to stretch thee on the ground, thou, whom the descent of the thunderbolt could not overwhelm? Seeing thee succumb in combat, the Hosts of the Gods, standing in the heavens with the Rishis, emit shouts of joy. Assuredly this very day the Plavamgamas, making use of a favourable occasion, will scale the gates and fortifications of Lanka on every side, which heretofore were impregnable! I have no further need for a kingdom and what shall I do with Sita? Bereft of Kumbhakarna, I no longer wish to live. Since I am unable to kill Raghava, the slayer of my brother in combat, would it not be better to die, for life is empty to me? To-day I shall go where my brother has gone, nay, far from my brother I cannot live for an instant! Witnessing my plight, the Gods, who were formerly wronged by me, will certainly mock me! O Kumbhakarna, now that thou art dead, how shall I vanquish Indra? Bibishana's prudent speech, that great soul whom I disregarded in my blindness, has proved true; the cruel end of Kumbhakarna and Prahasta has justified his words! This is the disastrous consequence of that deed of mine, the banishment of the virtuous and fortunate Bibishana."

Such were the many burning lamentations to which the Ten-necked Ravana gave voice in the anguish of his soul on account of Kumbhakarna, his younger brother, the enemy of Indra, and, knowing him to have perished in combat, he swooned away.

CHAPTER 69

Narantaka is slain by Angada

HEARING the lamentation of the wicked Ravana who was overcome with grief, Trishiras addressed him thus :—

" O King, brave men do not give way to sorrow even at the death of so valiant a warrior as thy younger brother, our uncle. Since thou art able to conquer the Three Worlds, O Lord, why, like a common man, dost thou suffer thy courage to falter? Brahma bestowed on thee a spear, mail, a dart, a bow and a chariot harnessed to a thousand mules, sending forth a rumble like unto a thundercloud; furnished with all these weapons, thou wilt vanquish Raghava! Yet if it please thee, O Great King, I myself will descend into the arena and bear away thy foes, as Garuda the serpents. As Shambara fell under the blows of the King of the Gods and Naraka under those of Vishnu, so shall Rama fall this day, struck down by me on the battlefield."

At these words of Trishiras, Ravana, the Lord of the Titans, under the sway of destiny, felt himself to be born anew and, hearing Trishiras speak thus, Devantaka, Narantaka and Atikaya, burning with martial ardour, desired nothing more than to enter into combat. "Away! Away!" roared those valiant sons of Ravana, the foremost of the Nairritas, the equals of Shakra in prowess.

All were able to fly in the air, all were skilled in magic, all had humbled the pride of the Gods, all were invincible warriors, all were endowed with great strength, all enjoyed great renown, of none was it recounted that they had been defeated in battle even by the Gods, Gandharvas, Kinneras or great Serpents. All were expert in the use of weapons, all were courageous and able fighters, all were highly learned and all had been the recipients of great boons.

Surrounded by his sons, the king, radiant as the solar orb, the destroyer of the power and glory of his foes, shone like Maghavat amidst the Gods, the humbler of the pride of the great Danavas.

Embracing his sons, he covered them with ornaments and sent them out to fight, heaping blessings upon them. Nevertheless Ravana sent his brothers Yuddhonmatta and Matta to accompany those youthful warriors and watch over them in the struggle. Then those heroes of immense stature paid obeisance to the mighty Ravana, the destroyer of creatures, and, circumambulating him, departed. Thereafter the foremost of the Nairritas, furnished with every kind of medicinal herb and perfume, went away, eager to fight, and Trishiras, Atikaya, Devantaka, Narantaka, Mahodara and Mahaparshwa, under the sway of destiny, set out.

A magnificent elephant, like unto a dark cloud, offspring of Airavata's race, named Sudarshana, served as Mahodara's mount and that hero, furnished with every weapon, armed with a quiver, seated on his elephant, shone like the sun on the peak of the Astachala Mountain.

Trishiras, born of Ravana, was seated in an excellent car drawn by the foremost of steeds and it was filled with weapons of every kind. Standing in his chariot, armed with his bow, he looked as resplendent as a storm cloud on the peak of a mountain, attended by lightning, thunder, meteors and Indra's bow.[1] With his triple crown, Trishiras shone in his chariot like Himavat, the Lord of Mountains with its golden crests.

Then the exceedingly war-like Atikaya, son unto that Lord of the Titans, most skilful of archers, ascended a superb chariot with excellent wheels, stout axles, magnificent steeds, carriage and yoke, rich in quivers and bows, filled with missiles, swords and maces, and that warrior wore a diadem encrusted with gold and covered with gems so that he looked like Meru shining in its own splendour. That mighty Prince of the Titans, surrounded by the foremost of the Nairritas, glowed in his chariot like the God who bears the thunderbolt amidst the Immortals.

And Narantaka, mounted on a white steed, as swift as thought, harnessed with gold, resembling Ucchairavas, was armed with a javelin like unto a thunderbolt and appeared exceedingly resplendent, resembling the illustrious Guha, the offspring of Shikhin riding on his peacock.

Devantaka, bearing a gilded iron bar, looked like an incarnation

[1] Indra's bow—The Rainbow.

of Vishnu holding the Mandara Mountain in his arms and Mahaparshwa, full of strength and energy, brandished a mace like unto Kuvera armed for combat.

Thereafter those intrepid warriors set out from Lanka like the Gods leaving Amaravati and powerful titans on elephants, horses and in chariots thundering like clouds, followed, armed with excellent weapons; and those youthful beings shone like the blazing sun with their brows encircled with diadems, sparkling in splendour like planets flaming in the heavens and, in the brightness of the raiment in which they were attired, that brilliant cavalcade resembled an autumn cloud or a flock of cranes in the sky.

Determined to die or vanquish their foe, they went forward in this courageous resolve, eager to fight, boasting, shouting and uttering threats, and those invincible heroes set out furnished with arrows amidst the clamour and clapping of hands, causing the earth to tremble as it were.

As the roars of their troops seemed to rend the heavens, those mighty titan princes, full of joy, increased their pace and beheld the simian host brandishing rocks and trees, whilst from their side, the courageous leaders of the monkeys observed the titan army with its mass of elephants, horses and chariots advancing like unto a thunder cloud to the sound of hundreds of gongs and, furnished with huge weapons, encompassed on all sides by the resplendent Nairritas, resembling blazing torches or suns.

Beholding that company approaching, the desire of the Plavamgamas was realised and, armed with huge rocks, they redoubled their cries in their eagerness to fight the titans, who responded with their shouts. Hearing the roars that the monkeys and their leaders let forth, the titan ranks, provoked by the joyous cheering of the enemy, roared with an even greater fury in their extreme valour.

Thereafter, as they joined issue with that formidable host of titans, the monkeys with their leaders hurled themselves upon them, brandishing sharp rocks like unto mountains and those Plavamgamas, armed with crags and trees, threw themselves upon the titan forces, some fighting in the air and some on the ground. Some amongst those foremost of monkeys fought

with heavily-branched trees and the struggle between the titans and the monkeys became desperate.

Those monkeys of redoubtable courage let an unequalled shower of trees, stones and rocks fall on the enemy who overwhelmed them with a hail of missiles. Titans and monkeys roared like lions on the battlefield; the Plavamgamas crushed the Yatudhanas with blows from stones and, in fury struck those warriors covered in mail and jewels, mounted in chariots, and on elephants and horses in the fray. Then the Plavamgamas redoubled their attacks against the Yatudhanas with crags that they tore up with their hands. Their bodies tense, their eyes starting from their heads, shouting, they stumbled and fell, whilst those lions among the titans, on their side, pierced those elephants among the monkeys with sharp arrows, striking them with spears, mallets, swords, javelins and lances and they mowed each other down in their desire to triumph. The limbs of monkeys and titans were streaming with the blood of their enemies, and rocks and swords, thrown by the monkeys and titans, covered the blood-stained earth in an instant, so that the ground was smothered with titans like unto mountains, who, mad with martial ardour, had been crushed and mangled by their foes.

Thereafter the monkeys, giving and receiving blows, their rocks shattered, engaged in a fresh and dreadful fight, using the severed limbs as weapons. And the Nairritas struck the monkeys with their own corpses and the apes struck the titans with the titan dead. Tearing the rocks from the hands of their foes, the titans broke them on the heads of the monkeys who shattered the arrows of the titans, using the pieces to destroy them. And they overwhelmed each other with crags in the battle and monkeys and titans set up a roaring like unto lions.

Then, their armour and shields pierced, those titans, attacked by the monkeys, dripped blood as trees their sap, and some monkeys in the conflict, destroyed chariots with chariots, elephants with elephants, horses with horses, whilst the titans employed weapons like razors or half moons and Bhallas and pointed shafts in order to shatter the rocks and trees of those intrepid monkeys. In that encounter, the earth became impassable, covered as it was with monkeys and titans mangled and crushed under the rocks and trees in the fight.

Full of audacity and ardour, the monkeys, engaged in the struggle, casting aside all fear, fought the titans with a light heart and various kinds of weapons.

Witnessing that appalling mêlée, the joy of the monkeys and the massacre of the titans, the great Rishis and hosts of Celestial Beings emitted shouts of triumph.

Narantaka however, mounted on his steed, that was as swift as the wind, with a pointed lance plunged into the thick of the simian ranks like a fish into the sea and that warrior pierced seven hundred monkeys with his effulgent spear and that enemy of Indra, of exceeding courage, in an instant, single-handed, overthrew the army of the foremost of monkeys under the eyes of the Vidhyadharas and Maharishis, hacking a pathway for himself through the simian ranks, the bleeding flesh its mire, and which was covered with heaps of monkey corpses as high as hills.

Whenever those lions among the monkeys sought to bar his way, so often did Narantaka cleave their ranks by mowing them down. As a fire burns up a forest, so did he consume those simian battalions and each time those inhabitants of the woods tore up the trees and rocks, they fell under his lance like mountains riven by lightning.

Brandishing his glittering spear in the forefront of battle, the valiant Narantaka ranged the entire welkin, overthrowing everything in his course as the wind in the rainy season and, whether they stayed at their post or went out to meet him, those courageous monkeys could neither stand against him nor escape from him so that all fell, pierced by that warrior.

That unique javelin resembling Death itself,[1] bright as the sun, was able, by itself, to destroy the ranks of the monkeys and leave them stretched on the earth, and the impact of that pike resembled the stroke of lightning so that the monkeys were unable to endure it and emitted loud cries. Those high-souled and intrepid monkeys, falling, resembled the peaks of mountains crumbling away, struck by lightning.

Meanwhile the powerful leaders of the monkeys, who had previously been put to flight by Kumbhakarna, having regained their vigour, were ranged round Sugriva and he, looking about

[1] The Reaper Death.

him, observed the army of the monkeys fleeing before Narantaka, terror-stricken and scattering in all directions.

Witnessing this stampede, he beheld Narantaka, spear in hand, who was advancing, mounted on his steed. At this, the illustrious Sugriva, King of the Monkeys, addressed the youthful Prince Angada, a warrior whose valour equalled Shakra's, and said :—

" Go out against that bold titan, who, riding on a horse, is consuming the army I have sent against him and speedily deprive him of his life's breaths."

At this command from his sovereign, the intrepid Angada, the foremost of monkeys resembling a rocky mass, broke away from that company like the sun emerging from a cloud and, with the bracelets he wore, he glittered like a mountain with its metallic veins. Without any weapons save his nails and teeth, that son of Bali, in his great strength, rushed out to meet Narantaka and said to him :—

" Why dost thou strive with common monkeys ? Do thou with thy spear, the impact of which is equal to lightning, strike my breast which I now present to thee ! "

The words of Angada, son of Bali, angered Narantaka, who bit his lip with his teeth hissing like a serpent, and hurled himself upon him in fury. Brandishing his spear, which glittered like fire, he struck at Angada but the weapon broke against the breast of that son of Bali, that was as hard as diamond, and fell to the earth.

Seeing his lance shattered, like a snake whose powerful coils are sundered by Suparna, the son of Bali raised his hand and struck the head of the steed of his adversary. Sinking to its knees, its eyeballs starting from their sockets, its tongue hanging out, that horse, as high as a hill, fell to the earth, its head crushed by the blow from the palm of his hand.

Then Narantaka, beholding his steed lying dead, grew enraged and, clenching his fist, struck the son of Bali on the forehead with energy so that the hot blood gushed forth from his injured brow. Now he flared up with wrath and then swooned away and, having lost consciousness awhile, on coming to himself was confused.

Thereafter Angada, Bali's mighty son, clenching his fist,

which equalled Mrityu's in strength and resembled a great rock, brought it down on Narantaka's breast.

His chest crushed, broken by the shock, vomiting flames, his limbs streaming with blood, Narantaka fell on the earth like a mountain struck by lightning: and when the mighty Narantaka fell in the struggle with Bali's son, from the sky, the foremost of the Celestials and the monkeys emitted a great shout of triumph! And Angada filled Rama's heart with joy and he was astonished at his exceedingly difficult achievement. Thereafter that warrior of illustrious exploits eagerly prepared for fresh encounters.

CHAPTER 70

The Death of Devantaka, Trishiras, Mahodara and Mahaparshwa

SEEING that Narantaka was slain, those lions among the Nairritas, Devantaka, Trishiras and Mahodara, the son of Poulastya, wept bitterly.

Thereafter Mahodara, mounted on that Indra of elephants like unto a cloud, rushed impetuously on the exceedingly energetic son of Bali.

Then the valiant Devantaka, distressed on account of the calamity that had visited his brother, arming himself with a formidable mace, also ran on Angada and, in his turn, the energetic Trishiras, standing in his chariot, that was as bright as the sun and harnessed to excellent steeds, advanced on the son of Bali.

Attacked by three of the foremost of titans, who had humbled the pride of the Gods, Angada tore up a many-branched tree, and as Shakra his flaming thunderbolt, hurled that huge trunk with its immense branches at Devantaka. Thereupon Trishiras severed it with his arrows which resembled venomous snakes and Angada, beholding the tree shattered, darted forward and that elephant among monkeys caused a shower of trees and rocks to fall upon the titans.

Enraged, Trishiras broke them with his whetted shafts and, with the head of his mace, Mahodara crushed them, while

Trishiras pursued the valiant Angada with his darts. Thereafter Mahodara urged his elephant to advance on the son of Bali and, in his anger, pierced his breast with Tomaras that were equal to lightning, and Devantaka, provoked, approaching Angada, struck him with his mace and swiftly turned away. The combined assault of those three Nairritas left that illustrious warrior unmoved; that agile and invincible hero however hurled himself in great fury on the colossal elephant belonging to Mahodara and, with the palm of his hand, struck it down.

Its eyes starting from their sockets, the elephant fell dead and that powerful son of Bali tore out one of its tusks, thereafter, rushing on Devantaka, he dealt him a blow in that struggle which caused him to stumble like a tree buffeted by the wind, and he vomited blood profusely which was the colour of lac. Breathing with difficulty, the energetic and mighty Devantaka, brandishing his mace, struck Angada a violent blow. At the impact, the son of that Indra among Monkeys fell to his knees but soon rose up again and, as he did so, Trishiras, with three infallible and formidable darts, pierced that son of the simian king.

Meanwhile Hanuman and Nila, beholding Angada assaulted by three of the foremost of the titans, came to his aid, and Nila struck Trishiras with a rock which the skilful son of Ravana broke with his sharp darts. Shattered by a hundred arrows, its surface broken to pieces, that rocky peak, from which sparks and flames spurted, fell.

Witnessing their astonishment, the courageous Devantaka, full of joy, in the fight flung himself with his mace on the son of Maruta and, as he rushed upon him, that lion among the monkeys leapt to meet him and with his fist struck him a thunderous blow on the head. Thereafter the heroic son of Vayu, that great and powerful monkey, battered in his skull and his roaring caused the titans to tremble. Devantaka, the son of the King of the Titans, gasping from the blow, his skull shattered, his teeth protruding, his eyes starting from their sockets, his tongue hanging out, fell to the earth instantly bereft of life.

Enraged by the death of the foremost of the titan warriors, that mighty enemy of the Gods, Trishiras, let fall a fearful shower of whetted shafts on Nila's breast and Mahodara, in fury, quickly

mounted a second elephant as high as a hill. As the sun scales the Mandara Mountain, so did he let fall a rain of arrows on Nila as, under a rainbow, a cloud lets loose a shower on a mountain amidst the muttering of thunder. Covered with those darts, with which the valiant titan overwhelmed him, the leader of the monkey army, his limbs pierced, faltering, swooned away; then coming to himself, Nila tore up a rock covered with many-branched trees and, with a terrific bound leapt on Mahodara and struck him on the head. Crushed by the impact with which that elephant among monkeys had just overwhelmed him, Mahodara fell to earth deprived of life, like a rock riven by lightning.

Beholding his uncle slain, Trishiras seized hold of his bow and, full of ire, pierced Hanuman with his sharp arrows. Thereupon the son of the Wind, provoked, flung a crag at the valiant Trishiras who broke it to pieces with his whetted shafts. Seeing that his missile was useless, the monkey let fall a rain of trees on the son of Ravana in the struggle and he, observing that shower of trees falling through the air upon him, severed them in fury with his sharp arrows, emitting shouts of triumph. Then Hanuman, leaping upon his steed, tore at it violently with his nails, as the King of the Beasts claws a great elephant.

Thereafter, from his side, the son of Ravana, as Death with his noose, arming himself with a spear hurled himself on the son of Anila. As a meteor falls from the skies, so did that lance descend unobstructed and that lion among the monkeys caught it and snapped it, emitting a great shout.

Beholding that weapon of formidable aspect destroyed by Hanuman, the monkey forces raised joyful roars like unto the rumble of thunder, and Trishiras, the foremost of the titans, drawing his sword, pierced the breast of that Indra of the Monkeys.

Wounded by the thrust of his sword, the mighty Hanuman, born of Maruta, struck that Three-headed One on the breast with the palm of his hand. Smitten by the blow from Hanuman's palm, the illustrious Trishiras let his gauntlet fall and dropped swooning to the ground, and as he fell, the great monkey, who resembled a mountain, broke his sword letting out a roar which struck terror in all the titans. Unable to endure the terrible cry of triumph, that ranger of the night rose up

and struck Hanuman with his fist. The blow infuriated the great monkey who, in anger, seized hold of the titan by his crown and, as formerly Shakra severed the head of Tashtri's son,[1] so Hanuman, with a terrific stroke of his sharp sword, cut off his three heads each encircled with a diadem and decorated with earrings. The heads of that enemy of Indra with their large eyes resembling stones, their glances like unto a glowing brazier, fell to the earth like stars falling from the sky. When the enemy of the Gods, Trishiras was slain by Hanuman, who was equal to Shakra in valour, the monkeys shouted in triumph and the earth shook, whilst the titans scattered on all sides.

Beholding Trishiras, Yuddhonmatta and the irresponsible Devantaka and Narantaka slain, the fury of Matta knew no bounds. Seizing a mace, plated with gold, stained with flesh, blood and foam, immense, glittering, saturated with the enemy's gore, its point effulgent, festooned with scarlet garlands, the terror of Airavata, Mahapadma and Sarvabhauma,[2] he armed himself with that weapon. In his fury, Matta, that lion among the titans, scattered the monkeys like the Fire at the end of the World Period.

Meanwhile the monkey, Rishabha, rushed towards Mattanika,[3] the younger brother of Ravana, and stood courageously facing him. Beholding that monkey, as high as a hill, standing before him, Matta, enraged, struck him violently on the chest with his mace that resembled lightning. Under the impact of that weapon, the lion among monkeys, his chest riven, stumbled, blood flowing in streams from the wound. Regaining consciousness after a long time, that prince of the monkeys, his lips trembling, threw a savage glance at Mahaparshwa and, with a bound, hurled himself on that titan; thereafter the impetuous leader of the intrepid monkeys, of the size of a mountain in stature, clenched his fist and struck him full on the chest and, like a tree whose roots have been severed, the titan suddenly fell to the earth, his limbs streaming with blood. Thereupon, Rishabha, tore that terrible mace which resembled the Rod of Death, from his grasp, shouting in triumph. For an instant

[1] Tashtri's son. The son of Vishvarupa.
[2] The Elephants supporting the Quarters.
[3] Another name of Matta.

that enemy of the Gods appeared to be dead but, regaining his senses, his colour that of an evening cloud, he threw himself on the son of the Lord of Waters and struck him.

Dazed by the shock, the monkey sank to the ground, but, having regained consciousness, quickly rose again, and, brandishing the mace resembling a huge rock, he struck the titan a violent blow. When that terrible mace fell on the powerful breast of the enemy of the Gods, hostile to sacrifice and the priests, from his riven breast, blood fell in torrents, as mineral-charged waters flow from a mountain. Thereafter Rishabha, still armed with that formidable weapon, advanced upon him rapidly, striking his mighty adversary again and again and that hero felled Mattanika in the forefront of the battle and, crushed by his own mace, his teeth and eyes pressed in, Matta sank to the earth bereft of life and strength like a rock shattered by lightning.

At his fall, all those titan warriors fled and, Ravana's brother being slain, the whole army of the Nairritas, which was as vast as the sea, throwing away their weapons, seeking only to preserve their lives, scattered in all directions like the sea bursting its banks.

CHAPTER 71

Lakshmana slays the Titan Atikaya

WITNESSING the rout of his great army, causing the hair to stand on end, and the death of his brothers the equals of Shakra in prowess and, beholding his two uncles Yuddhonmatta and Matta, the foremost of the titans, struck down in the fight, the illustrious Atikaya, who resembled a rock, the humbler of the pride of Devas and Danavas, he who had been favoured by Brahma, fell into a transport of rage.

Ascending his chariot, glittering like a hundred suns, that enemy of Indra hurled himself on the monkeys and, stretching his bow, that titan, wearing a diadem and adorned with sparkling earrings, proclaimed his name, emitting a tremendous shout. The proclaiming of his name, the leonine roar and the fearful twanging of his bow-string struck terror in those monkeys and

they, beholding that gigantic warrior, reflected:—'Kumbhakarna has come again' and, in their panic, took shelter one with the other. At the sight of that apparition, like unto Vishnu taking the three strides, the simian warriors, seized with fear, fled in all directions and in the presence of Atikaya, those monkeys, bewildered, sought refuge with the one who is the refuge of all, the elder brother of Lakshmana.

At that instant, Kakutstha beheld the titan, like unto a mountain, standing in his chariot, afar off, armed with a bow and roaring like a cloud at the time of the dissolution of the worlds. Seeing that monster, Raghava, struck with astonishment, re-assuring the monkeys, enquired of Bibishana, saying:—

"Who is that archer, as high as a hill, with yellow eyes, standing in his vast chariot, harnessed to a thousand horses amidst sharp picks, javelins, gleaming and pointed darts, who shines like Maheshwara among the Bhutas and who is surrounded by glittering spears that fill his car like tongues of the Fire of Death, blazing like a cloud riven by lightning, his best and golden-backed bow illumining his marvellous car on all sides, as Shakra in the heavens? This tiger among titans diffuses a brilliant light over the battlefield as he, the prince of warriors, advances in a chariot reflecting the sun's rays. On the point of his standard, Rahu has lent him his splendour[1] and his arrows like unto the rays of the sun light up the ten regions; his triply-curved bow, inlaid and backed with gold, resounding like thunder, is as resplendent as Shatakratu's! With its standard, banner, carriage and the four outriders who escort it, that vast chariot thunders like a storm cloud. Eight and thirty quivers lie in the car with dreadful bows furnished with yellow cords! Two shining swords illumine its sides, their hafts measuring four palms and they are assuredly ten palms in length. With his red garlands, this hero of the size of a mountain, dark of hue, his great mouth like unto death, resembles the sun veiled by cloud! Who is this titan leader with his arms loaded with golden bracelets?"

Thus questioned by Rama, the descendant of Raghu of immense energy, the extremely illustrious Bibishana answered:—

"It is the valiant son of that king who is without equal in

[1] Rahu being his emblem.

might, Dashagriva of great splendour, the younger brother of Vaishravana of terrible exploits, the mighty Ravana, Lord of the Titans. Full of reverence for his elders, renowned for his strength, the most skilful of those versed in the science of arms, he is able to fight on horseback or on the back of an elephant, either with a spear or bow and, whether it be a question of destruction or of sowing dissension or of making peace, of bestowing gifts, of using diplomacy or of strategy, he is highly esteemed. His mother was Dhanyamalini and he is named Atikaya.

" Having found favour with Brahma through his chastity and austerity, he has obtained possession of marvellous weapons with which he has overcome his enemies and Swyambhu granted him invulnerability to Gods and Danavas and bestowed this celestial armour on him and a chariot reflecting the sun's rays. A hundred times has he triumphed over Gods and Danavas, rescued the titans and exterminated the Yakshas. In battle, that intrepid warrior stayed Indra's thunderbolt with his darts and repelled the noose belonging to the Lord of the Waters, Varuna. He, Atikaya, the most powerful of the titans is the intelligent son of Ravana and the subduer of the pride of Devas and Danavas. Speedily direct thine efforts against him, O Lion among Men, lest, with his arrows, he annihilate the monkey race ! "

At that instant, the mighty Atikaya, shouting again and again, stretching his bow, hurled himself on the monkey host.

Beholding that fearful monster, standing in his chariot, the greatest of car warriors, the foremost of the illustrious monkey leaders advanced to meet him, and Kumuda, Mainda, Nila and Sharabha, coming together, also went out with trees and rocks.

Then that mighty titan, prince of warriors, broke those rocks and trees and all the monkeys resisted him, but that virtuous hero of appalling stature, pierced them with iron darts. Overwhelmed by that hail of missiles, their limbs dislocated, demoralized, they were unable to endure the furious assaults of Atikaya and that hero sowed terror amidst the hosts of the valiant monkeys, as a lion, proud of its youth and strength, stands amongst a herd of deer ; nevertheless that Indra among the titans desisted from striking any who were defenceless.

Thereafter with his bow and quiver, he rushed on Rama and addressed him proudly, saying :—

"Here I stand in my chariot with my bow and arrows in my hand! I do not contend with common soldiers but he, who desires it and is willing, I challenge, here and now, to combat!"

This speech incensed Saumitri, the slayer of his foes, and, in his rage, he sprang forward with a smile of disdain, bow in hand. Provoked, he advanced, taking an arrow from his quiver and placing himself before Atikaya, stretching his great bow so that the earth, the sky, the sea and the four quarters resounded with the formidable thrumming of the bowstring and terror seized those rangers of the night.

Hearing that dreadful twanging of Saumitri's bow, the powerful and valiant son of that Indra of Titans was astounded and, enraged on beholding Lakshmana advancing towards him, he took out a sharp dart and spoke thus :—

"Go hence, O Saumitri, thou art but a child without any experience of warfare; why dost thou seek to measure thy strength with mine, who am the equal of Death! Nay, assuredly the force of these arrows loosed by mine arm may not be withstood by Himavat himself nor the earth nor the heavens. Thou art seeking to rouse the Fire of Dissolution which, to thy good fortune, is now sleeping. Throw away thy bow and go hence! Do not sacrifice thy life by advancing to meet me! Nevertheless if thou art determined not to turn back then stay and, yielding up thy life, enter Yama's abode! Behold my whetted shafts, which wrought of refined gold, subdue the boasting of mine adversaries and resemble Shiva's trident. This arrow also, resembling a serpent, shall this instant quaff thy blood as the king of the beasts drinks the blood of the lord of the elephants."

Speaking thus, in rage, the titan placed an arrow on his bow and that speech of Atikaya's, full of wrath and threats, infuriated Lakshmana who was brave and virtuous by nature so that he answered him proudly and with dignity, saying :—

"Superiority is not measured by speech nor is bragging indulged in by men of worth! Here I am armed with my bow, an arrow in mine hand, manifest thy prowess, O Wretch! Reveal thyself in deeds and cease to blow thine own trumpet!

He who conducts himself with courage is said to be a warrior! Thou art furnished with every kind of weapon, art mounted on thy chariot and hast a bow; now manifest thy valour either with arrows or with magic darts! I shall cut off thine head with my whetted shafts as the wind detaches the ripe fruit of the palm from its stem! Soon mine arrows, decorated with refined gold, shall drink thy blood, that their points will cause to flow by piercing thy limbs. Thou hast said 'He is but a child' but let not this thought cause thee to underestimate me. Old or young, know that it is death who is about to enter into combat with thee. Vishnu, while yet a child, covered the Three Worlds in his three strides!"

These words of Lakshmana, fraught with sense and reason, exasperated Atikaya, who laid hold of an excellent dart. At this, Vidyadharas, Bhutas, Devas, Daityas, Maharishis and Guhyakas of great soul, gathered to witness the duel.

Thereafter Atikaya, provoked, placed an arrow on his bow and loosed it on Lakshmana and it ate up space, as it were, but that sharpened arrow like unto a venomous snake, in the form of a crescent, as it flew was severed by that slayer of his foes and, seeing his dart broken, Atikaya, in a paroxysm of rage took out five arrows at once, and that ranger of the night loosed them on Lakshmana, but before they reached him, the younger brother of Bharata shattered them with his whetted shafts.

Having severed those missiles with his sharpened darts, Lakshmana, the slayer of his foes, selected a pointed arrow, the brilliance of which sent forth flames and placed it on his excellent bow, then bending it with force, he struck the forehead of that prince of the titans.

That shaft, sinking into the brow of the terrible titan with the blood that covered it, resembled the King of the Serpents entering a mountain and, as the formidable gateway of Tripura shook, when struck by Rudra's shaft, so did that titan falter at the impact of Lakshmana's weapon. Breathing heavily, that colossus reflected 'Assuredly the arrow thus loosed proves to me that thou art a worthy adversary!' Thinking thus, he opened his mouth and, stretching his great arms, leaning on his seat, urged his chariot forward.

One, three, five and seven were the arrows selected by that lion among the titans and, placing them on his bow and drawing it, he let them fly and those shafts, bright as the sun, seemed as it were to set the firmament ablaze. Meantime, unmoved, the younger brother of Raghava severed them with the aid of innumerable whetted darts. Seeing those arrows broken, the son of Ravana, enemy of the Lord of the Gods, incensed, took hold of a sharp weapon and, placing it on his bow, he loosed it with great force against Saumitri, who was advancing towards him, striking him on the breast. Wounded in the breast by Atikaya, Saumitri began to bleed profusely, like an elephant discharging its temporal juices, and that prince plucked out the shaft and threw it away; thereafter he selected a sharp dart to which he joined a mantra-charged arrow and set Agni's weapon on his bow whereupon both bow and arrow spat forth flames. Thereupon Atikaya, endowed with great strength, took up Rudra's weapon and fixed an arrow with a golden haft, resembling a serpent, on his bow.

Then Lakshmana loosed that powerful weapon, his flaming and redoubtable missile on Atikaya like Antaka wielding the Rod of Death. Seeing that shaft joined to the Agneya dart the Ranger of the Night loosed Rudra's shaft joined to Surya's weapon, and those two missiles rushed towards each other in space and their flaming points made them appear like infuriated serpents. Devouring each other, they fell on the earth, their fire extinguished, reduced to ashes and bereft of their splendour, and having set the sky ablaze, they lay without lustre on the earth.

Thereafter Atikaya, enraged, discharged the Aishika Reed joined to Twashtar's Weapon, but the mighty Saumitri severed it with Indra's shaft. Seeing the reed broken, that prince born of Ravana, enraged, joined a spear to Yama's Weapon and that ranger of the night hurled it at Lakshmana who destroyed it with the Vayavya Weapon.

Then, like a mass of cloud letting loose its rain, Lakshmana, in anger, covered the son of Ravana with a rain of missiles and those shafts coming in contact with Atikaya's coat of mail which was encrusted with diamonds, had their points shattered and fell on the earth. Seeing them rendered fruitless Lakshmana,

the slayer of hostile warriors, covered his adversary with a thousand arrows. Inundated by that hail of shafts, Atikaya, that mighty warrior, whose cuirass could not be pierced, remained unmoved and that hero was unable to inflict a wound on the titan.

Thereafter the Wind-god approached him and said:— "Because of the boon received from Brahma, that warrior is clothed in impenetrable armour, do thou therefore strike him with the Brahma Weapon, else he may not be slain, his mail being proof against aught else!"

On hearing Vayu's words, Saumitri, the equal of Indra in prowess, instantly took up a dart of incredible velocity and joined it to Brahma's Weapon. Having placed that excellent weapon with the foremost of arrows furnished with sharp points on his bow, every region, the sun, moon and the great planets were struck with terror and the heavens and earth also shook. Then, having fixed the Brahma Weapon on his bow, that missile, the stem of which being like death's messenger and equal to lightning, Saumitri let it fly on the son of Indra's foe. And Atikaya beheld that shaft loosed by the mighty-armed Lakshmana, swift as the tempest, with its haft encrusted with gold and diamonds, falling upon him and beholding it, immediately struck at it with his innumerable shafts but that arrow, swift as Suparna himself, flew towards him with extreme velocity and seeing it draw near, like Death at the time of dissolution, Atikaya struck at it with lances, spears, maces, axes, picks and arrows with unrelenting energy, but those weapons of marvellous aspect were rendered fruitless by that flaming dart, which, striking him, severed his head with its diadem.

Cut off by Lakshmana's arrow, the head instantly fell on the earth with its crown like unto the peak of Himavat. Then those rangers of the night, who had escaped the slaughter, beholding the body lying on the ground, its raiment and adornments in disarray, were thunderstruck and, their features distored, those unfortunate beings, exhausted with fighting, suddenly began to emit piercing and inarticulate cries. Thereafter those titans, who surrounded their dead leader, terrified, without paying him honour, fled towards the city.

The monkeys, however, their faces shining like full-blown

lotuses, in their delight, all paid homage to Lakshmana on account of the success he had won in striking down that formidable adversary who was renowned for his prowess and theretofore invincible.

CHAPTER 72

Ravana, overcome by anxiety, makes further Plans

HEARING that Atikaya had been slain by the mighty Lakshmana, Ravana became extremely anxious and spoke as follows :—

" Dhumraksha, who is full of ardour and the most skilled in the use of arms, Akampana, Prahasta, and Kumbhakarna, those valiant titan warriors eager for combat, the destroyers of hostile forces, ever invincible, brave titans of immense stature who were versed in the use of every weapon, have fallen with their troops under the blows of Rama of imperishable exploits. Yet many powerful warriors were struck down by my son Indrajita, who is renowned for his strength and prowess ; those two brothers were fettered by his formidable shafts bestowed on us as a boon. All the Gods and Asuras combined, despite their power, could not have broken those fearful bonds, nor the Yakshas, Gandharvas or Pannagas ! I do not know by what force, magic or supernatural means, those bonds were severed by those two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana.

" Those courageous titans, who went out to fight at my command, have all perished in combat with the exceedingly valiant monkeys. Henceforth I do not see who, on the battlefield, will be able to slay Rama and Lakshmana or the powerful Sugriva and his forces.

" Ah ! How mighty is Rama ! How great is the range of his shafts ! Those titans, who challenged this warrior, have all been destroyed ! Now, on his account, let defences be set up everywhere, both in the city and round the Ashoka Grove where Sita is being guarded. Let the entries and exits be patrolled continuously by our sentinels, wherever they are posted ! Establish yourselves with the foremost battalions everywhere

in order to observe the movements of the monkeys, O Night-rangers! In the evening, at midnight or at dawn, no matter when, do not relax your vigilance in regard to the simian army. Observe what troops are placed in the line by the enemy, how they advance and where they halt; let the gateways and turrets be barricaded at once!"

All the titans listened to the commands of the mighty Lord of the Titans and went away to carry them out. Ravana, the King of the Titans, however, having issued these orders, exceedingly despondent, entered his abode, the fire of his anger smouldering within him, and that powerful monarch of those rangers of the night, reflecting on the misfortune that had befallen his son, sighed without ceasing.

CHAPTER 73

Indrajita making himself invisible puts the Monkey Army out of action

The titans, who had escaped the slaughter, hastened to apprise Ravana of the death of their leaders, Devantaka and others, as also Trishiras and Atikaya.

Hearing these mournful tidings, great tears immediately filled the king's eyes and for a long time he remained absorbed in the melancholy thought of the death of his sons and brothers.

Beholding the wretched monarch plunged in an ocean of grief, Indrajita the son of that Lord of the Titans, the foremost of warriors, addressed him thus:—

"O My Dear Father, since Indrajita still lives, do not give thyself up to despair! O Prince of the Nairritas, he whom the enemy of Indra strikes with his shafts in the fight is not able to preserve his life. To-day thou shalt see Rama and Lakshmana lying stretched on the earth, their bodies pierced, torn to pieces by mine arrows, their limbs riddled with my whetted shafts. Bear witness to the well-considered vow of Shakra's enemy re-inforced by my prowess and the divine power! This very day I shall overwhelm Rama and Lakshmana with

arrows that never miss their target. Let Indra, Vaivasvata, Vishnu, Rudra, the Sadhyas, Vaishvanara, Chandra and Surya this day witness mine immeasurable prowess as redoubtable as that of Vishnu at Bali's place of sacrifice!"

Having spoken thus, that rival of the Lord of the Celestials, craved permission of the king to depart and with fearless soul ascended his chariot, that was as swift as the wind, harnessed to excellent steeds and furnished with weapons, resembling the car of Hari himself. Then he set out for the battlefield immediately and that magnanimous hero was escorted by innumerable warriors, full of ardour, bearing great bows in their hands.

As they advanced, some on the backs of elephants, others on prodigious mounts such as tigers, scorpions, cats, mules, buffalo, serpents, boars, cheetahs, lions and jackals, as large as hills, crows, herons and peacocks, those titans of redoubtable courage were armed with javelins, hammers, sabres, axes and maces. To the sound of conches and the rolling of drums, that valiant enemy of the King of the Gods rushed out to fight. With his parasol, pearly like the moon, that slayer of his foes shone like the firmament when that orb is full. Fanned by marvellous chowries with elegant handles, that warrior, adorned with golden ornaments, the foremost of archers, Indrajita, blazed like the solar disc and he, whose strength was irresistible, illumined Lanka like the burning sun in the sky. Then that intrepid subduer of his foes, on reaching the battlefield, ranged the titans round his chariot and, according to the traditional rites, that Prince of the Titans prayed to the God who feeds on sacrificial offerings,[1] whose brilliance he possessed, reciting the most auspicious mantras, and, offering libations of Soma and roasted grain, with garlands and perfumes, that resplendent leader of the titans invoked Pavaka.

Thereafter he brought there weapons such as Sharapatras, Samidhs and Bibhitakas with red robes and an iron spoon and, heaping the fire with Sharapatras and Tomaras, he seized hold of a live goat by the neck.

Blazing up suddenly the fire gave off no smoke but manifested the signs betokening victory and, having been lit, the flames

[1] The God of Fire, Pavaka or Agni.

bright as gold, whirling in a southerly direction, passed through the crucible and instantly consumed the offerings.

Thereafter Indrajita, who was skilled in handling arms, took out the Brahma-weapon and pronounced a mantram on his bow, his chariot and on all. Then he, having uttered the sacred formula and invoked Pavaka, the firmament, the sun, the planets, the moon and the stars, trembled. Having called on the God of Fire, whose brilliance he possessed, he, the equal of Indra in power, whose strength was unimaginable, disappeared in the sky with his bow, arrows, sword, chariot, horses and spear.

Then the army of titans, abundantly furnished with horses and chariots, flags and pennants, burning to fight, set out emitting war cries and, in the struggle, those titans, full of rage, attacked the monkeys with darts of different kinds which were sharp, swift and beautifully wrought, and with spears and hooks. Beholding them, the son of Ravana, addressing those rangers of the night, cried out :—" Attack the foe speedily whom you are burning to destroy ! Be of good cheer ! "

At these words, the titans, in their anxiety to triumph, roared aloud and caused a hail of missiles to descend on those redoubtable monkeys. Arming himself with arrows,[1] maces and clubs, Indrajita, on his side, in the midst of the titans, assaulted the monkeys from where he stood invisible in the sky.

Then those monkeys, struck down in the fight, instantly began to assail Ravani with blows from stones and trees and, full of anger, Indrajita, born of Ravana, that hero full of power, smote the monkeys with a single lance and, in fierce fury, pierced five, seven and nine monkeys at one time to the great delight of the titans. Thereafter that invincible warrior crushed those monkeys under his shafts that glittered like the sun and were decorated with gold.

Their limbs pierced, the monkeys, overwhelmed by those arrows, fell like great Asuras destroyed by the Gods. Before this second Aditya who consumed them with those formidable weapons as his rays, those lions among the monkeys fled away, filled with terror. Their bodies mutilated, their senses confused, they stampeded, bathed in blood and terrified but, in their

[1] Different kinds of arrows such as Nalikas and Navachas. See Weapons Glossary.

devotion to Rama, those monkeys, willing to sacrifice their lives. suddenly halted and returned shouting, armed with rocks, and, closing their ranks, showered down a hail of trees, crags and stones on Ravani.

That murderous and fearful avalanche of trees and rocks was however dispersed by the mighty Indrajita, who was ever victorious in combat and, with his arrows as bright as fire, resembling serpents, that prince pierced the ranks of his foes. With eighteen penetrating darts he wounded Gandhamadana; with nine others he struck Nala, who stood some way off, and, in his great strength, he assailed Mainda with seven arrows, tearing out his entrails, and Gaja with seven blunted shafts. Thereafter he pierced Jambavan with ten arrows, Nila with thirty and Sugriva, Rishabha, Angada and Dvivida with dreadful flaming arrows that had been received as boons, thus rendering those foremost of the monkeys insensible, who, struck by innumerable shafts fell under his furious onslaught so that he appeared like the Fire of Death itself.

With the aid of arrows as bright as the sun, loosed with skill, that were exceedingly swift, he scattered those monkey divisions in that great fight and, with transports of the keenest joy, that renowned warrior, born of the Indra of the Titans, witnessed the entire simian army, bathed in blood, overwhelmed with that rain of missiles.

Under that shower of arrows and cruel hail of weapons with which he assailed them, the valiant Indrajita ranged the monkey ranks spreading destruction. Then, leaving his army behind, he speedily flung himself on the monkey forces in that great fight, covering them with a huge wave of formidable shafts like the downpour from a dark cloud.

Victims of his magic arts, their bodies crushed by those missiles loosed by that vanquisher of Shakra, the monkeys, who were as large as rocks, emitted piteous cries, falling in the fray like great hills struck by Indra's thunderbolt, and they could see nothing but those sharp arrows decimating their ranks, whilst the enemy of the King of the Gods, that titan, veiled in his magic power, remained invisible. Then that illustrious Prince of the Titans let fly his whetted shafts that shone like the sun in all directions covering the foremost of the monkeys and destroying them;

and he caused spears, swords and axes resembling fire, shooting forth flames like a glowing brazier from which sparks fly, to fall on the ranks of the foremost of the Plavagas. Under the arrows and flaming darts, with which the vanquisher of Indra overwhelmed them, the monkey leaders resembled Kimshuka Trees in full flower.

As they looked upwards, some, struck in the eyes were blinded, and jostling one another, fell to the earth. With the aid of javelins, spears and whetted shafts charged with mantras, Indrajita, the Prince of the Titans, crushed all those warriors, Hanuman, Sugriva, Angada, Gandhamadana, Jambavan, Sushena, Vegadarshin, Mainda, Dvivida, Nila, Gavaksha, Gavaya, Kesarin, Hariloman, Vidyuddamshtra, Suryanana, Jyotimukha, Dadhimukha, Pavakaksha, Nala and Kumuda and, having disarmed those monkey leaders, he caused a shower of glittering darts, like unto the rays of the sun, to fall on Rama, and Lakshmana who accompanied him.

Under the wave of arrows, which he heeded as little as though they were drops of rain, Rama, of prodigious splendour began to ponder within himself and said to his brother :—

" O Lakshmana, having overwhelmed the simian army, that Indra among the Titans, the enemy of the Gods, trusting in his powerful weapon, now attacks us afresh with his sharp darts ! In virtue of the boon he has received from Swyambhu, that hero, full of energy and prowess, has made himself invisible despite his formidable size. How may Indrajita, who has taken up arms against us, be struck down in combat when his body is invisible ?

" I recognize this to be the weapon and power of Swyambhu, the Beneficent and Incomprehensible One ! With a tranquil heart, O Sagacious Lakshmana, bear the fall of this shaft with me to-day ! Let this Indra of Titans, the leader of them all, cover us with a rain of darts ! The entire army of the Monkey King, his greatest warriors having been struck down, appears to have lost its splendour, yet when Ravani beholds us lying stretched insensible and impotent, manifesting neither joy nor anger, he will certainly rejoin Ravana, the enemy of the Gods, in his abode, having gained a great victory."

Thereafter Indrajita, overwhelmed them both with a hail of

missiles and, having reduced them to a state of impotence, that Indra among the Titans set up a shout of triumph.

In this way, having overcome the simian army in battle, as also Rama and Lakshmana, he returned at once to the city ruled by Ravana's hand where, extolled by the Yatudhanas and filled with delight, he related all to his sire.

CHAPTER 74

On Jambavan's Instructions, Hanuman goes to the Mountain of Medicinal Herbs

SEEING the two Raghavas lying unconscious on the field, the army of monkeys and their leaders lost courage, nor did Sugriva, Nila, Angada or Jambavan dare to take any action.

Thereupon Bibishana, foremost among the wise, seeing the general despondency, with his sagacious words re-assured those warriors belonging to the simian king, saying :—

" Although those two princes are lying here without consciousness, have no fear, you have no cause to despair ; it is in order to honour Swyambhu's pledge that they have allowed themselves to be struck down by Indrajita with his rain of missiles ! Indrajita received that excellent weapon that is not to be withstood from Brahma. It is in order to render homage to that God that the two princes have fallen in the fight ; it is therefore not the moment to lose heart ! "

Having paid honour to Brahma's weapon, Maruti answered Bibishana, saying :—

" Let us console those who still live among the army of the monkeys, which has been decimated by that celestial shaft."

Thereupon, with torches in their hands, those two heroes, Hanuman and the foremost of the titans, began to range the battlefield together during the night, and they beheld the earth covered with tails, hands, breasts, feet, fingers, necks and severed limbs, scattered here and there, from which the blood flowed, and monkeys as large as hills fallen on the field, their weapons still glowing.

Thereafter Bibishana and Hanuman beheld Sugriva, Angada, Nila, Sharabha, Gandhamadana, Jambavan, Sushena, Vegadarshin as also Mainda, Nala, Jyotimukha, Dvivida and all those monkeys lying on the battlefield. Seventy-six kotis of brave monkeys had been overthrown in the fifth and last period of the day by Brahma's cherished weapon.

While looking on that formidable army, that had fallen under the blows of the enemy and that resembled the waters of the sea, Hanuman, accompanied by Bibishana, began to search for Jambavan and, beholding that aged one, bowed with the weight of years, riddled with a hundred arrows, the valiant son of Prajapati, like unto an extinguished brazier, the grandson of Poulastya[1] rushed towards him and said :—

" O Hero, is it possible that those penetrating shafts did not cut off thine existence ? "

Hearing the voice of Bibishana, Jambavan, the foremost of the bears, who was scarcely able to speak, answered saying :—

" O Indra among the Nairritas, thou who art full of valour, I recognize thy voice, O Pious One, say whether he, on account of whom Anjana and Matarishwan are happy parents, that hero, Hanuman, still lives ? "

On this enquiry from Jambavan, Bibishana replied :—

" Why dost thou remain silent concerning the two princes and question me on the subject of Maruti ? How is it that King Sugriva, Angada or even Raghava do not inspire thee with an affection as great as that which thou bearest for the son of Vayu, O Venerable One ? "

Hearing Bibishana's words, Jambavan answered :—" Hear, O Tiger among the Nairritas, as to why I enquire concerning Maruti ; it is, that should the valiant Hanuman still live, even if the army has been destroyed, it is not destroyed ! If Maruti yet lives, O Dear Friend, he, the rival of Maruta, the equal of Vaishvanara in power, then there is still the possibility of survival ! "

At that moment the son of Maruta approached that venerable one with reverence, paying obeisance to him and touching his

[1] POULASTYA—Ravana and his younger brother Bibishana were descended from the Sage Poulastya.

feet and the voice of Hanuman moved his heart, so that the Prince of the Plavagas felt new life had been bestowed on him.

Thereafter the illustrious Jambavan said to Hanuman :—

" Come hither, O Mighty One, it is for thee to deliver the monkeys, none other has the power and thou art their best friend. This is the moment to demonstrate thy prowess, I see no other ; do thou bring joy to those brave troops of bears and monkeys ! Heal those two unfortunate beings, Rama and Lakshmana of their wounds. Prepare to cross far above the great path of the ocean in order to reach Himavat, the highest of mountains, O Hanuman, and there direct thy course to that golden Peak Rishabha, difficult to scale and of an extreme altitude. There the summit of Mount Kailasha will be seen by thee, O Slayer of Thy Foes ! Between the peaks of these two mountains, thou wilt behold the mountain of medicinal herbs rising in unparalleled splendour, where every kind of healing plant abounds. O Foremost of the Monkeys, thou wilt discover four plants growing on the summit, the radiance of which illumines the ten regions. They are—Mritasamjivani, Vishalyakarani, Suvarnakarani and Sandhani,[1] herbs of rare value. Gather all four, O Hanuman, thou the son of the Bearer of Fragrance, and return to aid the monkeys by reviving them."

At these words of Jambavan, Hanuman, born of Maruta, felt himself infused with tremendous power, as the ocean heaves with the force of the wind. Standing on the summit of the high mountain which he crushed with his weight, the valiant Hanuman looked like a second mountain. Trodden down by the monkey's feet, the mountain sank, unable to endure the load that pressed so heavily upon it, and the trees fell to the ground and caught fire on account of the rapid course of the monkey, whilst the peaks, trampled down by him, were shattered. Thus crushed, its trees, rocks and soil torn up, it became impossible for the monkeys to stand erect on that high mountain which was shaking, and Lanka, with its great gateways destroyed, its dwellings and bastions crumbling, full of terror-stricken titans, appeared to be reeling. Then the son of Maruta, like unto a

[1] MRITASAMJIVANI Reviver of the Dead.
VISHALYAKARANI. Healer of wounds inflicted by darts.
SUVARNAKARANI. That which heals the skin.
SANDHANI. That which produces a salve for wounds.

mountain, trod that support of the earth under foot, causing the earth and sea to quake; pressing the mountain under his feet, he opened his mouth like the fearful jaws of Vadava and began to roar with all his might in order to strike terror into the titans and, when they heard that formidable clamour, those lions among the titans in Lanka were paralysed with fear.

Thereafter, paying obeisance to Samudra, Maruti, the scourge of his foes, possessed of redoubtable courage, for Raghava's sake prepared himself for the undertaking.

Raising his tail which resembled a serpent, flattening his ears and opening his mouth wide, like unto the entry to Vadava, he sprang into the air with an impetuous bound, drawing trees with their branches, stones and a rabble of monkeys in his wake and, borne away by the force of the wind produced by the movement of his arms and thighs, deprived of resistance, they all fell into the ocean.

Then the son of Vayu, stretching his two arms that resembled the coils of serpents, with a strength equal to the enemy of reptiles,[1] set out in the direction of that celestial peak of the Lord of the Mountains, displacing all the cardinal points as it were. And he observed the ocean that rolled on and on with its garlands of waves and all the creatures moving in its depths while he coursed on like the discus loosed by the fingers of Vishnu. Mountains, flocks of birds, lakes, rivers, ponds, vast cities, crowded provinces, passed under his gaze as he journeyed on with the swiftness of his sire, the Wind-god. And the agile and courageous Hanuman, the rival of his father in valour, strove to follow the orbit of the sun and, in extreme haste, the foremost of monkeys went on with the speed of the wind and all the quarters re-echoed to the sound.

Then Maruti, that great monkey, full of energy, remembered Jambavan's words and suddenly Himavat appeared with its many streams, its great number of caves and waterfalls, the many kinds of trees that adorned it and its peaks like a mass of white clouds lovely to look upon. Thereafter he approached that King of Mountains and, as he drew near that Indra of high mountains with its golden peaks of great altitude, Hanuman beheld those illustrious and holy retreats of the ascetics,

[1] Garuda.

frequented by the foremost of the Gods, Rishis and Siddhas, and he saw Brahmakosha,[1] Rajatalaya, Shakralaya, Rudrasharapramoksha, Hayanana and the blazing Brahmashiras and he recognized the servants of Vivasvat.

Thereafter he beheld the Vahnyalaya and the Vaishravanalaya, Suryaprabha and the Suryanibandhana, Brahmalaya and Shankarakarmukha, thus did he perceive the centre of the earth; and Hanuman also discovered the steep Mountain Kailasha and the Rock of Himavat and Vrisha, that sublime and golden mountain, illumined by the radiations of all the curative herbs, the King of Mountains, where all the simples grow. Astonished on beholding that mountain wreathed in phosphorescent fires, the son of Vasava's messenger descended on that Lord of Hills covered with medicinal herbs, in order to gather them.

Then the great monkey, born of Maruta, covered a thousand leagues, ranging that mountain where those specifics grew on that most elevated of peaks; nevertheless, those sovereign remedies, knowing that Hanuman had come to gather them, made themselves invisible. Thereupon that hero, not being able to see them, grew angry and, in his ire, began to emit loud cries. Impatient, his glances inflamed, he questioned that mountain, the support of the earth, saying :—

" What impels thee, thou who art of such strength, to show thyself (to be) without pity for Raghava? O King of the Mountains, the hour having struck, overcome by the power of mine arms, thou shalt see thyself shattered to pieces ! "

Thereupon, seizing hold of the crest with its trees, elephants, gold and many kinds of ore that adorned it, with its summit of

[1] BRAHMAKOSHA. The Place of Hiranyagarbha.
RAJATALAYA. The Place of the Silver-navelled One. A mountain near Kailasha.
SHAKRALAYA. The Abode of Shakra.
RUDRASHARAPRAMOKSHA. The place where Rudra discharged the arrow at Tripura.
HAYANANA. The Place of the Horse-necked One. (See Hayagriva).
BRAHMASHIRAS. The Abode of the Deity presiding over the Brahma Weapon.
VIVASVAT. The God of Death.
VAHNYALAYA. The Abode of the Fire God.
VAISHRAVANALAYA. The Abode of Kuvera.
SURYAPRABHA—SURYANIBANDHANA. The Place where the suns meet.
BRAHMALAYA. The Abode of the Four-faced Brahma.
SHANKARAKARMUKHA. The Place of Shankara's bow.
ROCK OF HIMAVAT. The rock on which Rudra sat to practice asceticism.
VRISHA. The name literally means—The Bull of Shiva.

jagged peaks and sublime and radiant plateaus, he broke it off roughly.

Having thus uprooted it, he flew into the air to the great terror of the worlds, the Gods and their leaders and to the acclamations of innumerable inhabitants of the sky. Thereafter he flew away with the speed of Garuda, carrying that rocky peak which shone like the luminous orb and he too was filled with radiance as he followed the path of the sun. Coursing thus in the vicinity of that orb, he appeared to be its very image, and that peak spread a great light over the son of the God, who is the bearer of fragrance, so that it appeared as if Vishnu Himself, armed with his discus of a thousand fiery rays, were in the sky.

Then the monkeys, observing him, shouted with delight and he also on beholding them, emitted tremendous roars.

Hearing those cries of triumph, the inhabitants of Lanka set up a dreadful clamour and Hanuman alighted on a high rock in the midst of that host of monkeys.

Thereafter he bowed to the chief monkeys and embraced Bibishana.

Then the two sons of that King of Men, having inhaled those wonderful herbs, were instantly healed of their wounds and the others, those valiant monkeys, rose up in their turn and all the brave Plavagas were instantly cured of their wounds and sufferings, having inhaled those wonderful herbs and those who had been slain returned to life like sleepers waking when the night is over.

From that moment the monkeys and titans fought in Lanka itself, and thereafter on Ravana's command and out of perversity, all the titans struck down in the fight by the valiant monkeys, both wounded and dead were thrown into the sea.

Meantime the son of the Bearer of Fragrance, Hanuman, of formidable bounds, carried the peak of medicinal herbs back to Himavat and returned with speed to rejoin Rama.

CHAPTER 75

Lanka is set on fire by the Monkeys

AT that moment, Sugriva, the illustrious King of the Monkeys, addressed Hanuman in words fraught with wisdom, saying :—

"Now that Kumbhakarna has been slain and the youthful princes have perished, Ravana can no longer harm us ! Therefore let those valiant and agile Plavamgamas, who are able to do so, hurl themselves on Lanka with torches in their hands ! "

Meanwhile the sun had withdrawn behind the Astachala Mountains and at the dread hour of night, the foremost of the monkeys approached Lanka with flaming torches and those simian ranks, furnished with fiery brands, rushed in on all sides so that the grim-visaged titan sentinels instantly fled away. Then the monkeys joyfully set fire to gates, pavilions, highways and byways and buildings of every kind, and the dwellings were consumed by thousands, and the public monuments, as high as mountains, toppled down and fell to earth ; all was consigned to the flames ! Sandal of great price, pearls, brilliant jewels, diamonds and coral, woollen cloths, rich silks, carpets of many kinds made of lambs wool, vases and weapons of gold, countless rare objects, harness and horse cloths, collars and girths for elephants, chariots with their furnishings and decorations, warrior's armour, trappings for their mounts, swords, bows and bow-strings, arrows, spears, goads and lances, cloths of wool and horsehair, tiger skins, innumerable perfumes, palaces enriched with pearls and precious gems, with stores of arms of every kind, all were burnt to ashes. And the fire consumed all the buildings with their ornamentation and devoured the dwellings of the titans who inhabited them.

Clad in armour encrusted with gold, decorated with garlands and other ornaments, their eyes wild with inebriation, wine caused those inhabitants of Lanka to reel as they walked, whilst courtesans clung to their apparel, and they were incensed with fury against their foes. Armed with maces, picks and swords,

they were gorging themselves with meat and drink or sleeping on sumptuous beds with the objects of their desire. Full of terror they fled distracted, carrying their sons with them in all haste, whilst their luxurious and splendid mansions, which combined every comfort, were consumed by fire in hundreds and thousands on every side. Those golden buildings that seemed to touch the skies constructed like moons and crescents with their magnificent upper galleries, their trellised windows and terraces decorated with pearls and crystal, re-echoed to the cries of herons, peacocks and the tinkling of ornaments.

Asleep in the many-storied residences, the lovely courtesans, awakened by the flames that scorched them, threw off the jewels that impeded their flight, crying:—'Ah! Alas!' in piercing tones.

Meanwhile the palaces crumbled in the fire that consumed them, and those flaming mansions spread their light afar, like unto the summits of high mountains when struck by Indra's thunderbolts, so that it appeared as if the Peak of Himavat itself were ablaze.

The houses on all sides, wreathed in fire, resembled blossoming Kimshuka Trees; thus did Lanka appear that night! Elephants and horses that had broken loose from their keepers gave the city an appearance of the ocean with its maddened sharks and crocodiles at the time of the end of the world! Here a horse was seen running unchecked or an elephant standing motionless in terror. Lanka in flames illumined the sea, the waters of which, streaked with shadows, seemed to flow with blood.

In an instant, the monkeys had set fire to the city and it looked as if the whole earth were aflame, as at the dread destruction of the world.

Seeing the smoke, the women began to shriek and, when the flames reached them, their cries could be heard at a hundred leagues distance. The titans rushed out of the city, their limbs covered with burns, whereupon the monkeys, eager to come to blows, fell upon them. Monkeys and titans set up such a clamour that it caused the ten regions, the ocean and the whole earth to re-echo.

Meantime, healed of their wounds, the two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, intrepid warriors, took up their marvellous bows and, when Rama drew that excellent weapon, the dreadful

thrumming thereof struck terror in the titans and, whilst he bent his great bow, Raghava shone in glory, as Bhava in his fury when he stretches the bow of the Vedas.[1]

Under the shafts loosed by that warrior, one of the gates of the city, resembling the peak of Mount Kailasha, fell shattered on the earth, and beholding Rama's arrows falling on temples and mansions, those Indras among the titans made a supreme effort and, while they closed their ranks, they emitted leonine roars so that it appeared as if the Night of Final Dissolution was at hand.

Then the leaders of the monkeys received orders from the magnanimous Sugriva, who said :—

" Enter the nearest gate and begin to fight, O Plavagas! If any amongst you acts contrary to my orders, let him be slain ! "

Thereupon the monkey leaders bearing torches in their hands, took up their positions at the entrance of the city and, beholding them, Ravana, transported with fury yawned and the ten regions were thrown into confusion so that it seemed as if Rudra were manifesting his wrath. In his rage he sent out Kumbha and Nikumbha, both born of Kumbhakarna, with innumerable titans and, at his command, Yupaksha, Shonitaksha, Prajangha and Kampana set out with the two sons of Kumbhakarna.

Then with the roar of a lion, Ravana said to those valiant warriors :—

" Go forth immediately, O Titans ! "

At his command, those brave titans, with their shining weapons, left Lanka emitting a continuous clamour and, with the splendour of their ornaments and persons they illumined the whole firmament as did the monkeys also with their torches.

Then the light of the moon and stars and the brilliance of the two armies irradiated the heaven whilst the rays of the moon, their ornaments and the planets lit up the ranks of monkeys and titans on all sides and the light from the half-demolished mansions projected lurid flames over the flowing and tumultuous waves.

[1] A bow having the characteristics proper to bows as laid down in the Veda of Archery (Dhanur Veda.)

With their flags and pennants, their swords and excellent axes, their formidable cavalry, chariots and elephants, their innumerable hosts of infantry, their spears, maces, sabres, javelins, darts and shining bows, that terrible army of titans of redoubtable valour and ardour seemed to be furnished with flaming missiles and, amidst the clash of hundreds of gongs, their arms, encased in golden sheaths, were brandishing axes, and the javelins of the titans rang as they struck with their arrows and their great bows, whilst the air was permeated with the fragrance of their garlands and the aroma of wine.

Beholding that formidable army of titans that was not to be withstood, emitting the muttering of a great cloud, the Plavamgamas were agitated and, whilst their terrible opponents advanced towards them they let forth loud cries.

Thereafter the enemy forces hurled themselves upon them like moths into a flame and, their maces whirling in their fevered hands, emitted lightning flashes which increased the exceeding splendour of that host of excellent titans.

Meanwhile, as if a prey to intoxication, the monkeys rushed forward eager to fight, striking those rangers of the night with blows from trees, rocks and fists, whilst they advanced on them loosing their sharp arrows. Then those titans of immense energy, cut off the heads of the monkeys who tore off their ears with their teeth and battered in their skulls with their fists, crushing their limbs with stones as they moved about. Other rangers of the night, of grim aspect, struck the foremost of the monkeys here and there with their sharp swords and the slayer was slain in his turn, cursing and biting as they massacred each other. Then one cried 'Strike!' and was struck in his turn, whilst another called 'It is for me to deal the blow' and yet others called in chorus 'Why trouble thyself? Stay!'

Amidst the stained missiles, armour and shattered weapons, long spears were thrust forward and blows from fists, maces, sabres, javelins and ploughshares were given. Then the encounter between monkeys and titans assumed terrifying proportions and, in the conflict, the rangers of the night slew their enemies in tens of sevens and, in their turn, the army of titans, their raiment in disorder, their armour and standards shattered, were assaulted and hemmed in on all sides by the monkeys.

CHAPTER 76

The Prowess of Angada and Kumbha : Kumbha is slain

AT the height of that appalling struggle in which so many valiant soldiers perished, Angada advanced on the heroic Kumbha; and the impetuous Kampana, in anger, challenged Angada and, forestalling him, struck him a violent blow causing him to reel. Thereafter that warrior, coming to himself, hurled a rock on his adversary, who, crushed under the blow, fell to the ground.

Seeing Kampana slain, Shonitaksha drove his chariot boldly at the monkey and, in his fury, struck him with his sharp and fiery arrows, tearing his flesh; then, like unto the Fire of Death, he loosed innumerable flaming Kshuras, Kshurapras, Narachas, Vatsadantas, Shilimukhas, Karnis, Shalyas and Vipathas[1] on him, and that valiant and energetic son of Bali, his limbs pierced, in his might, snapped the formidable bow of that titan and shattered his chariot with its shafts also.

Thereupon Shonitaksha instantly took up his sword and shield and, without hesitation, sprang forward with an impetuous bound but the courageous Angada, receiving the violent impact, with a shout, broke that weapon with his hand. Thereafter that lion among monkeys, as if following the line of the sacred thread, let the blade fall on the titan's shoulder, cutting it in two and, raising his great sword, the son of Bali, shouting again and again, ran to the forefront of the battle to seek out further opponents.

Now, in company with Prajangha, the courageous Yupaksha drove his car furiously against that valiant monkey and, at that instant, Shonitaksha, breathing heavily, rushed on that warrior of the golden bracelets.[2] Full of energy, Prajangha, the intrepid companion of Yupaksha, hurled himself on the mighty Angada, mace in hand and, between Shonitaksha and Prajangha

[1] See Glossary of Weapons.
[2] Angada.

the Prince of Monkeys resembled the full moon between two Vishakhas.[1] Then Mainda and Dvivida went to Angada's aid and stood on guard near him, whilst the titans of immense stature, their battalions drawn up, full of vigour, threw themselves furiously on the monkeys with swords, arrrows and maces and the encounter between those Indras among the monkeys, in the grip of those bulls of titans, was desperate, causing the hair to stand on end. In that fight, the former, seizing trees and stones, discharged them, but Prajangha, who was exceedingly powerful, broke them with his sword. Stones and trees fell thick and fast on his chariot but were all severed by the countless shafts of the mighty Yupaksha, while the trees that, on their side, were thrown by Dvivida and Mainda, were crushed and destroyed by Shonitaksha, who was full of ardour and courage.

Thereafter the infuriated Prajangha, brandishing his great sword with which he severed the limbs of his adversaries, leapt on Angada and, seeing him close beside him, that Indra among the monkeys, in his great strength struck him a violent blow with an Ashvakarna Tree and, with his fist, hit out at the arm holding the sword which fell at the impact. Beholding his sword lying on the earth, like unto an iron bar, that powerful titan raised his fist and, like unto lightning, brought it down with great force on the brow of the intrepid Angada, foremost among the monkeys, who reeled for an instant but, having regained his senses, that courageous son of Bali, boiling with rage, struck Prajangha's head from his shoulders.

Then Yupaksha, seeing his paternal uncle lying on the field, quickly alighted from his chariot, his eyes full of tears and, as his quiver was empty, drew his sword.

Beholding Yupaksha rushing towards him thus, Dvivida, with a mighty blow, struck him on the breast and, in his ire, seized hold of him with force. Perceiving his valiant brother made captive, the exceedingly energetic Shonitaksha struck Dvivida on the chest, and the blow caused the intrepid Dvivida to stumble, but he clung to the mace that his rival sought once more to raise against him. Meanwhile Mainda joined Dvivida, and Shonitaksha and Yupaksha, burning with courage, engaged

[1] Asterisms, (see Nakshatras.)

the two Plavagas in a terrible struggle. The mighty Dvivida tore the face of Shonitaksha with his nails and, dragging him to the ground, crushed him, whilst Mainda, fired with wrath, pressed Yupaksha in his arms so that he fell lifeless on the earth.

Then the army of those foremost among the titans, discouraged by the death of their leaders, turned and fled in order to rejoin the sons of Kumbhakarna ; and Kumbha, seeing those soldiers fleeing in all haste, rallied them and, perceiving those valiant warriors to have been cruelly used by the highly powerful monkeys, and their leaders being slain, Kumbha, full of ardour, began to execute difficult feats in the encounter.

Taking up his bow, he, the foremost and most skilled of archers, let fly a series of arrows like unto venomous serpents able to pierce the limbs and, with his shafts and marvellous bow, shining with a great lustre he appeared like a second Indra illumined by the effulgence of Airavata ! Thereafter he stretched that bow up to his ear and struck Dvivida with a golden-hafted and plumed arrow and, as soon as it pierced that foremost of the Plavagas, who resembled the Trikuta Mountain, his legs stiffened and, trembling, he stumbled and fell.

Mainda, however, beholding his brother succumb in that great combat, rushed towards his adversary with a huge rock and that hero hurled it at the titan, but Kumbha shattered it with five whetted shafts and, taking hold of another dart with a sharp point, resembling a poisonous snake, he struck the breast of Dvivida's elder brother with violence.

Under the blow, Mainda, the General of the Monkeys, his chest torn open, fell unconscious on the earth. Thereupon the fiery Angada, seeing his maternal uncles overcome despite their prowess, hurled himself on Kumbha who was stretching his bow and, as he advanced, Kumbha pierced him with five whetted darts, then with a further three, and again with three spears, as if he were attacking an elephant. Thus Angada was struck by the mighty Kumbha with innumerable shafts but, though his limbs were pierced by a succession of penetrating darts, that were flaming and adorned with gold, yet he remained immoveable and let fall a shower of rocks and trees on the head of that warrior born of Kumbhakarna, who cut off and severed all the weapons that the son of Bali loosed upon him.

Seeing that leader of monkeys, Kumbha cut off his two eyelids with twin arrows, as one blinds an elephant with torches, so that the blood flowed and his eyes were veiled; thereupon Angada, with one hand protected his bloody lids and with the other seized hold of a Sala Tree that stood near and, propping it on his chest, he stripped that leafy tree of its branches, and, having bent it a little, discharged it in the fight in the sight of all the titans, and that Sala Tree, that resembled the banner of Indra, appeared like unto Mount Mandara. Thereafter Kumbha cut that tree to pieces and pierced his adversary with seven pointed and murderous shafts so that Angada suddenly fell down, unconscious.

Beholding the invincible Angada stretched on the ground, like unto the sea when its waters recede, the leaders of the monkeys carried the tidings to Raghava. Then Rama, hearing that the son of Bali had fallen and been overcome in the course of a desperate struggle, issued his orders to the simian leaders who were led by Jambavan. At Rama's command, those lions among the monkeys, full of rage, their eyes red with anger, rushed on Kumbha, who was stretching his bow, and flew to the aid of Angada.

Then Jambavan, Sushena and Vegadarshin, enraged, threw themselves on that warrior born of Kumbhakarna, and seeing them advance, the titan cut short the impetuous onslaught of those foremost of monkeys with a hail of arrows, as a rock obstructs the course of a torrent and, in the path sown with arrows, the intrepid monkeys were unable to discern anything, nor, as the sea cannot overstep its shores, were they able to pass.

Beholding the simian ranks overwhelmed by the rain of shafts, the King of the Monkeys, Sugriva, placing his nephew, Angada, behind him, fell upon the son of Kumbhakarna in the fight, as an impetuous lion on an elephant who is wandering on the slopes of a mountain, and that powerful monkey tore up huge trees, Ashvakarnas and others of varying fragrance, in great numbers, which he hurled at his adversary. Then the illustrious son of Kumbhakarna, with his sharp arrows, shattered that irresistible avalanche of trees that covered the whole sky and scattered those forest giants that shone like Shataghnis.

Beholding the rain of missiles dispersed by Kumbha, the valiant Monarch of the Monkeys, full of glory and majesty, remained unmoved and, suddenly struck by an arrow, he seized hold of Kumbha's bow that was equal to Indra's and broke it, throwing that weapon on the ground with violence. Then, having accomplished that incredible feat, he angrily addressed Kumbha, who resembled an elephant whose tusks are broken, and said :—

" O Elder Brother of Nikumbha, thy strength and prowess in loosing thine arrows are admirable as are thy filial piety and courage and Ravana's also. O Thou who art equal to Prahlada or Bali or the Slayer of Vritra or Kuvera or Varuna, thou alone art like unto thy mighty Sire. Thou only, O Long-armed Warrior, armed with thy mace, the slayer of thy foes, cannot be overcome by the Gods any more than misfortune can overwhelm him who is master of his senses ! Advance, O Most Intelligent Prince and witness me in action !

" On account of a boon, thy paternal uncle is able to withstand Devas and Danavas and, full of prowess, Kumbhakarna, in his turn, defied the Suras and Asuras ! With thy bow thou art equal to Indra and in valour Ravana's peer ! In the world thou art now the foremost of the titans in strength and power ! Let all beings witness the mighty and prodigious duel between us to-day resembling the combat between Shakra and Shambara! By striking down those valiant monkeys, who were possessed of extreme courage, thou hast accomplished a feat without equal and manifested thy skill in the use of weapons. O Hero, it is from fear of incurring reproach that I have not slain thee, for thy great exploits have wearied thee ; rest awhile therefore, reflecting on my prowess ! "

Thus flattered by Sugriva with fair words, the ardour of that warrior was redoubled, as the sacred fire flames up when butter is poured therein. Then Kumbha seized Sugriva in his two arms, whereupon, like two elephants intoxicated with ichor, those two, breathing heavily again and again, their limbs interlaced, crushed each other, wrestling, and from their mouths emitting flames mingled with smoke. Under the trampling of their feet, the earth sank and the waters of Varuna's abode, overflowed on every side.

Finally Sugriva, having thrown Kumbha down with violence, cast him into the salty waves, thus causing him to become acquainted with the depths of the ocean. Nevertheless Kumbha rose again and leapt on Sugriva, with his fist delivering a furious blow like unto lightning upon his breast, and the armour of the monkey was shattered and blood gushed forth. That violent blow from the titan's fist struck against the bones of his adversary and, from the impact, a flame shot forth resembling the fire that bursts from the Mountain Meru when struck by lightning. Thereafter Sugriva, that mighty lion among the monkeys, effulgent like the solar disc of a thousand rays, parrying the thrust, lifted up a fist resembling a thunderbolt and brought it down with force on his opponent's breast. At the impact, which shattered him, Kumbha, bereft of his senses, sank like a brazier, the brightness of which is extinguished. Under this blow of the fist, the titan suddenly fell down, like unto the Lohitanga of brilliant rays expelled from heaven by the force of destiny. And Kumbha falling, his chest crushed by Sugriva, resembled the flaming body of a meteor shooting from the sky!

Thereupon Kumbha being struck down in the fight by that Monarch of the Plavamgamas of formidable valour, the earth with its mountains and forests trembled and a great fear seized the titans.

CHAPTER 77

The Fight between Nikumbha and Hanuman

NIKUMBHA, seeing his brother slain by Sugriva, gazed on the King of the Monkeys as if he would consume him with the fury of his glance, and that warrior took hold of his brilliant and terrible mace as large as the peak of the Mahendra Mountain, like unto the Rod of Death, the support of the titans, which was festooned with garlands, plated with gold and embellished with diamonds and coral.

Brandishing that weapon of a splendour equal to Indra's standard, the fortunate Nikumbha, who was endowed with redoubtable courage, opening his mouth wide, emitted loud

cries. With his breast adorned with golden pieces, his arms encircled with bracelets, his charming earrings and graceful garlands, his jewels and his mace, Nikumbha shone like a cloud shot with lightning and charged with thunder to which the bow of Indra is added. The tip of his weapon shattered the conjunction of the seven winds and that loud-voiced hero glowed like a smokeless flame, whereupon the firmament with the City of Vitapavati, the most lovely palaces of the Gandharvas, the clusters of stars and planets, the moon and great luminaries seemed to be spinning round with the whirling of Nikumbha's mace! Unapproachable in ardour, Nikumbha was like unto the Fire at the destruction of the worlds, his mace and his ornaments the flames, his wrath the fuel, and, in their terror, neither titans nor monkeys dared to move.

Hanuman, however, baring his breast, stood fearlessly before him, and that titan, with arms as thick as iron bars which shone like the star of day, brought his weapon down on the breast of that mighty one so that it broke into a hundred pieces like a meteor suddenly exploding in space. But the great monkey remained unmoved under the impact of that weapon like a mountain in an earthquake. Thus assailed by his adversary, Hanuman, the foremost of the Plavagas, swinging his fist round with extreme force and lifting it up, with a swift bound struck Nikumbha a violent blow on the chest so that his armour was shattered and blood shot forth like lightning from a cloud.

The shock caused Nikumbha to stumble but, steadying himself, he seized hold of the energetic Hanuman, whereupon a great cheering broke out amongst the inhabitants of Lanka, witnessing that combat.

Though lifted up in this wise by the titan, the mighty Hanuman struck him a violent blow with his fist and, freeing himself from Nikumbha's grasp, leapt to the ground, thereafter, with a supreme effort, in his rage he struck him down, crushing him and then, leaping into the air, he fell heavily on his chest and taking hold of his neck, pressed it with his two hands while he cried out, whereupon he tore off his head which was of an appalling size.

Amidst the shrieks emitted by Nikumbha, who had fallen under the blows of the son of Pavana, the armies of the son of

Dasaratha and the son of that Indra of the Titans, both filled with fury, entered into a desperate struggle. And Nikumbha being slain, the Plavagas emitted cries of joy that re-echoed in all the quarters of the horizon and the earth seemed to tremble and the heavens crumble, whilst the hosts of the titans were filled with terror.

CHAPTER 78

Maharaksha goes out to meet Rama and Lakshmana

SEEING Nikumbha slain and Kumbha also laid low, Ravana, in extreme wrath, appeared like unto a raging fire, and that Nairrita, mad with anger and grief, spoke with urgency to the son of Khara, the large-eyed Maharaksha, saying :—

"Go, O My Son, and, at my command, strike down Raghava and Lakshmana with all the dwellers in the woods."

On this behest, the son of Khara, Maharaksha, who was proud of his courage, answered :—

"It is well! I shall obey thee!" Thereafter, having paid obeisance to Ravana by circumambulating him, that valiant warrior emerged from his sumptuous abode. Then Khara's son addressed the commander of the army, who stood near, saying :—

"Let my chariot be brought hither immediately and assemble the troops at the earliest moment!"

On this, that night-ranger brought his chariot and assembled the army, whereupon Maharaksha, having paid obeisance to the car and circumambulated it, caused it to be driven forward urging on his charioteer with the words: 'Drive on!'.

Thereafter Maharaksha issued this order to all the titans :—

"Do ye precede me, O Soldiers! As for myself, the magnanimous Ravana has commanded me to slay those two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, in combat! Today I shall lay them low with my whetted shafts, O Night Rangers, as also the deer of the trees and Sugriva. Today, under the blows of my mace, the great host of monkeys will be destroyed as dry wood by fire!"

Hearing Maharaksha's words, the rangers of the night, furnished with all sorts of weapons, full of valour, closed their ranks. Able to change their shape at will, ferocious, endowed with sharp claws, their eyes inflamed, emitting the roar of elephants, causing the hair to stand on end, inspiring terror, those giants surrounded the huge son of Khara, shouting joyfully, shattering the vault of heaven. Then conches and drums sounded by thousands in all the quarters whilst they, leaping and clapping their hands, caused a great tumult.

Thereafter Maharaksha's charioteer suddenly let the goad drop from his hand, and the standard fell to the ground, whilst the horses, harnessed to his chariot, slackened their pace and stumbled as they advanced, mournfully shedding tears, and, as the illustrious Maharaksha set forth, a sinister and biting dust storm arose.

Nevertheless the titans, having witnessed those portents, set out unheeding and full of courage to meet Rama and Lakshmana and their hue was like unto herds of elephants or buffalo and they bore the marks of the blows from maces and swords received in the forefront of battle.

"Here stand I! Here stand I!" cried those seasoned warriors beginning to range to and fro on the battlefield.

CHAPTER 79

Maharaksha falls under Rama's Blows

SEEING Maharaksha approach, the foremost among the monkeys rushed forward burning to fight. Thereupon a desperate struggle ensued between the rangers of the night and the Plavagas, like unto that combat formerly waged between Devas and Danavas, causing the hair to stand on end.

Blows from trees and swords, clashes of maces and iron bars were exchanged, whilst monkeys and night-rangers assailed each other and the titans created carnage among the foremost of the monkeys with swords, maces, lances, javelins, harpoons, goads and arrows, nets, hammers, sticks and other weapons with which they struck out on every side.

Overwhelmed by a mass of missiles which the son of Khara hurled upon them, all the monkeys, distracted, fled full of terror and, seeing their enemies routed, the titans emitted leonine roars and triumphant shouts, while the monkeys scattered in all directions. Then Rama covered the titans with a hail of arrows and, beholding them overpowered in this wise, Maharaksha, that ranger of the night, consumed with the fire of his wrath, challenged Rama in these words, saying :—

" Stay ! It is with me, O Rama, that thou shouldst measure thy strength ! With whetted shafts loosed from my bow, I am about to relieve thee of thy life ! Since, in the Forest of Dandaka, thou didst slay my sire, remembering thine iniquity, my wrath has increased ! O Wicked Raghava, a violent fire consumes my limbs since I failed to meet with thee in that great forest ! By good fortune thou art now before me ; as a hungry lion desires to see its prey, so did I seek this encounter ! Soon shall my swift arrows despatch thee to the region of the dead where thou shalt rejoin the warriors thou hast slain ! Of what use are further words ? O Rama, let all the worlds witness our combat ; let us fight with darts, maces, fists or whatever weapon thou preferest ! "

Thus spoke Maharaksha and the son of Dasaratha, smiling, interrupted that flow of words, saying :—" O Titan, of what use is this prating ? It is in no wise worthy of thee ! On the battlefield one does not triumph by strength of words but by fighting ! Fourteen thousand titans and thy sire, Trishiras and Dushana himself, fell under my blows in the Dandaka Forest ! Today vultures, jackals and crows shall feed on thy flesh with their beaks, nails and claws, O Wretch ! "

Hearing these words of Raghava's, Maharaksha loosed innumerable shafts on him with great violence, but Rama, with a shower of darts, severed those golden-hafted and richly bejewelled arrows again and again so that they fell in pieces on the earth. Thereafter, as they joined issue, a desperate struggle ensued between the son of the demon, Khara, and the son of Dasaratha, and the clanging of their bow-strings and the clash of their gauntlets was like the muttering of thunderclouds.

Then Devas, Danavas, Gandharvas, Kinneras and great Serpents stood in the sky eager to witness that prodigious

conflict. Each wound inflicted on the combatants redoubled their ardour as they exchanged blow for blow, and the countless shafts loosed by Rama were destroyed by the titan whilst those of the titan were severed by Rama again and again.

Innumerable missiles covered all the regions and space itself and the earth was heaped on every side so that it could not be distinguished. Finally the long-armed Raghava, enraged, broke the bow of his adversary and with eight Narachas wounded his charioteer; with his shafts he demolished the chariot and slew the horses who fell to the ground.

Deprived of his car, Maharaksha, that prowler of the night, stood on the ground and, armed with his spear, he shone like Fire at the dissolution of the worlds; and he was irresistible with his great lance, a gift from Shiva, that glittered in the air like unto the weapon of destruction.[1]

Beholding that great spear that emitted flames, the Gods, struck with terror fled on all sides whilst that ranger of the night, lifting it up, hurled it with fury against the magnanimous Raghava. As it fell flaming from the hand of the son of Khara, Raghava, with four arrows, severed it in its flight and, broken at many points, that spear with its celestial gilding, having been destroyed by Rama's shafts, fell to earth like a great meteor.

Beholding that weapon shattered by Rama of imperishable exploits, the Bhutas cried out in the sky:—"Well done! Well done!" and observing his spear to be broken, Maharaksha, that, ranger of the night, raising his fist, called out to Kakutstha, "Stay! Stay!"

Seeing him advancing, Rama, the joy of the House of Raghu, smiling disdainfully, took the Fire-weapon from his quiver whereupon, struck by Kakutstha's shaft, the titan, his heart transfixed, fell down and perished.

Witnessing the fall of Maharaksha, all the titans, terrified of Rama's arrows, fled to Lanka. Thereafter the Gods rejoiced at the death of that night ranger, born of Khara, who had been stricken by the violent blows of Dasarathi and shattered like a mountain struck by lightning.

[1] The weapon Shiva is said to wield at the destruction of the universe.

CHAPTER 80

Indrajita sets out to fight once more

HEARING of the death of Maharaksha, Ravana, hitherto victorious in war, became a prey to violent anger, grinding his teeth and, enraged, he reflected on what ought to be done. Having considered the matter, in his wrath he sent his son, Indrajita, out to fight, saying :—

" Having triumphed over those two powerful brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, return, O Hero ! Visible or invisible, thou art superior in every way. Wert thou not victorious in the struggle with Indra of incomparable exploits, therefore why shouldst thou not succeed with these two mortals ? "

At this command of the King of the Titans, Indrajita, in obedience, proceeded to the place of sacrifice to offer oblations to Pavaka according to the traditional rites. During the ceremony female titans carrying red turbans also came there and took part in sacrificing to the fire. Thereafter titans came up hurriedly to that place where Ravani was, and, in that sacrifice, weapons such as Sharapatras, Bibhitakas, with fuel, red robes and iron ladles were placed there, then, having heaped the fire with Sharapatras and Tomaras, Indrajita seized hold of a living black buck by the neck. And that smokeless brazier devoured the sacred grass, oblations and fuel, whereupon many auspicious omens, indicative of victory, appeared. With its flames, bright as the moon, whirling in a southerly direction, the fire, having been kindled, seized hold of the offerings.

Thereafter, having offered oblations to Agni and gratified the Devas, Danavas and Demons, Indrajita ascended his marvellous car which he had rendered invisible. In his magnificent vehicle harnessed to four horses, that hero, furnished with whetted shafts and armed with his great bow, appeared resplendent. The chariot with its decorations of refined gold, carved with figures of gazelles, moons and crescents shone with beauty ; and Indrajita possessed a standard that, with its golden rings and encrustations of emerald, glowed like a brazier.

Under the protection of the Rod of Brahma, like unto the sun, the mighty Ravani was invincible. Setting out from the city, having invoked Agni and acquired the power to make himself invisible by the aid of sacred formulas lawful to titans, the triumphant Indrajita spoke thus :—

" Today I shall slay those two who have passed their exile in the forest in vain and, in combat, win a decisive victory for my Sire, Ravana. Today, having destroyed Rama and Lakshmana, I shall enjoy the supreme felicity of ridding the earth of monkeys!"

Having spoken thus, he made himself invisible and thereafter rushed furiously into the fray, whither Ravana had despatched him. Effulgent, with bow and shafts, that ardent adversary of Indra, beholding those two valiant heroes like unto a serpent with three heads, who were loosing a stream of arrows in the midst of the monkeys, reflected :—' These are those two ! ' and stretching his bow he covered those warriors with a shower of darts, as Parjanya lets loose his rain. Standing in his aerial car, invisible to the eye, he overwhelmed Rama and Lakshmana with whetted shafts.

Enveloped by those swift darts, Rama and Lakshmana placed celestial arrows on their bows and those two valiant warriors covered the sky with a rain of missiles as bright as the sun, without striking Indrajita.

Thereupon that powerful titan filled the sky with darkness and smoke, blotting out the cardinal points and shrouding himself in a dense fog; and, during his airy flight, neither the twanging of his bow-string nor the sound of the wheels nor the clattering of the horses' hoofs could be heard nor could he himself be seen.

In the midst of that fearful darkness, that long-armed warrior loosed a shower of Narachas so that it appeared like an avalanche of rocks and, with his golden shafts, bestowed on him as a boon, the furious Ravani wounded Rama and Lakshmana grievously in every limb.

Then those two lions among men, overcome by Narachas, like unto mountains under a deluge, loosed their whetted and golden-hafted arrows and those darts, adorned with heron's plumes, struck the son of Ravana in the sky and pierced him in his course, whereupon they fell on the earth covered with blood.

Thereafter, those two princes, with the aid of innumerable shafts, sought to sever the mass of missiles in their flight that burned them cruelly, and the two sons of Dasaratha aimed their excellent shafts in the direction whence those whetted darts fell. Ravani, however, a skilled driver, coursing on every side in his chariot, struck the two sons of Dasaratha with swift arrows and sharp shafts. Riddled by the golden-hafted arrows that rained upon them incessantly, the two sons of Dasaratha appeared like Kimshuka Trees in flower.

None could follow the rapidity of the titan's course; none catch a glimpse of him nor his chariot nor his arrows so that he resembled the sun obscured by heavy cloud.

Struck down, wounded and slain by him, the monkeys lay stretched on the earth in hundreds, whereupon Lakshmana, enraged, addressed his brother, saying :—

" Shall I loose the Brahma Weapon in order to exterminate all the titans ? " But Rama, who bore the marks of royalty, answered him :—

" Nay, it doth not behove thee to rid the earth of titans ! No one may strike him who has withdrawn from the fight, or who has sought protection or has hidden himself or stands before thee with joined palms or who is fleeing or intoxicated ! O Long-armed Hero, we will strive to slay Indrajita by employing those exceedingly fiery arrows resembling serpents. That magician, that insignificant titan with his invisible chariot will be overthrown by the monkey leaders should he reveal himself. Whether he penetrate heaven or hell or range the firmament, my shafts will consume him wheresoever he may take refuge and he will fall, deprived of life ! "

Having spoken these significant words, that hero of the House of Raghu, who was surrounded by the Plavagas, in his great might, reflected on how he should destroy that barbarian, the perpetrator of evil deeds.

CHAPTER 81

Indrajita's Stratagem. Sita's Apparition

INDRAJITA, having divined the mighty Raghava's intention, withdrew from the fight in order to re-enter the city. Thereafter, remembering the death of those brave titans, his eyes red with anger, the valiant Ravani set forth once more, leaving by the western gate surrounded by titans; and the extremely energetic Indrajita, the descendant of Poulastya, that thorn in the side of the Gods, seeing those warriors, the two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana burning to fight, resorted to magic and caused the illusory figure of Sita to appear in the chariot encircled by a large force and he made seeming preparations to slay her.

For the purpose of deceiving the monkeys, that wretch conceived this design and, advancing to meet them, resolved to slay Sita as it were. Then the monkeys, beholding him approaching, enraged, rushed upon him with rocks in their hands, burning to fight. At their head marched Hanuman, that elephant among monkeys, armed with an enormous mountain peak. And he beheld in the chariot of Indrajita the unfortunate Sita, with a single tress, sorrowful, her features wasted on account of fasting; and the beloved of Raghava wore only a soiled garment nor had she washed her countenance and the limbs of that lovely woman were covered with dust and mud.

Seeing Maithili, Hanuman stood a moment as if stupefied, for, but a little while since, he had beheld the daughter of Janaka and, at the sight of that unfortunate being standing sorrowfully in the car, under the sway of that Indra of Titans, Hanuman thought to himself 'What does this titan intend to do?' Having reflected thus, that great monkey, the foremost of the Plavagas, rushed forward to meet Ravani.

Beholding that simian army, the son of Ravana, transported with rage, drew his sword from its sheath and brandished it over Sita's head in their presence, and he struck that woman in the chariot, who was created by illusion, whilst she cried out,

"O Rama, O Rama!" Then Hanuman, born of Maruta, seeing the titan seize her by her attire, became greatly afflicted and tears of grief fell from his eyes as he beheld the cherished consort of Rama, who was so divinely beautiful. Thereafter, in his anger, he addressed the son of the King of the Titans harshly, saying :—

"O Wretch, it is to thy destruction that thou hast laid hands on her hair! O Offspring of a family of Brahmarishis, thou hast fallen into the womb of a female demon. Cursed art thou for thine infamous conduct in cherishing such a desire! Cruel and ruthless scoundrel, vile and puerile warrior, art thou not ashamed to perpetrate such an infamous deed? O Pitiless One, without a heart, what has Maithili done, torn as she is from her home, her kingdom and the arms of Rama, that thou shouldst seek to slay her without mercy? Sita being slain, thou shalt undoubtedly not survive long, since, deserving death for such a crime, thou hast fallen into my hands! When thou hast yielded up thy life's breath, thy fate will be the lowest hell to which the slayers of women descend and which is eschewed by the most infamous of evil-doers!"

Speaking thus, Hanuman, attended by armed monkeys, hurled himself in fury on the son of that Indra of Titans who opposed the powerful army of monkeys that surged towards him with his titans of redoubtable ferocity. And he himself assailed that simian host with thousands of arrows and thereafter addressed Hanuman, that monkey leader, saying :—

"I am about to slay Vaidehi before your eyes, who is the cause of Sugriva, thee and Rama, coming hither! She being slain, I shall destroy Rama, Lakshmana, thou thyself, O Monkey, and Sugriva, as also the vile Bibishana. Thou hast said 'One must not slay a woman', O Plavagama, but assuredly one is justified in doing that which will injure a foe!"

Speaking thus, with his sword furnished with a sharp blade, he struck Sita, that illusory phantom, who was sobbing and, having slain her, Indrajita said to Hanuman :—

"Behold how the beloved of Rama has fallen under my sword! Vaidehi is dead, thine arduous undertaking has been in vain!"

Having thus slain her with his great sword, Indrajita, full of

joy, standing in his chariot, began to shout aloud, and the monkeys, ranged before him at no great distance, heard him roaring full throatedly, stationed in his aerial citadel.

Having slain the illusory Sita, the perfidious Ravani manifested great delight and, beholding him fully satisfied, the monkeys, a prey to despair, took to flight.

CHAPTER 82

Hanuman rallies his Forces : Indrajita's Sacrifice

HEARING that formidable clamour and beholding Ravani, whose voice resembled Indra's thunder, the monkeys immediately fled in all directions.

Then Hanuman, born of Maruta, called to those who, with a downcast mien, sorrowful and fearful, were fleeing on all sides and said :—

" Why are you fleeing with a cheerless mien in all directions, O Plavamgamas ? Where is your courage ? Do not turn your back on the foe but follow me into battle ! "

At this reprimand from the virtuous son of Vayu, the monkeys, re-assured, armed with rocks and trees, advanced and, in a transport of fury, challenged the titans. Thereafter those lions among the monkeys encircled Hanuman who accompanied them in the great fight and, as the Consumer of Offerings burns up the east with his rays, so did Hanuman, surrounded on all sides by the foremost of monkeys, consume the enemy host. Creating carnage among the titans, that most powerful monkey, attended by the simian battalions, resembled Yama on the day of the final dissolution and, smarting with grief and anger, Hanuman hurled a huge rock on Ravani's chariot.

Seeing that missile descending, the driver, master of his horses, turned his car aside so that neither Indrajita nor the charioteer were struck by that rock which split the earth, burying itself after a fruitless flight.

Then those inhabitants of the woods, shouting, rushed on the enemy in their hundreds and those giants brandished trees and

mountain peaks so that Indrajita was covered by a fearful hail of trees and stones by those Plavamgamas of redoutable valour. And they created havoc in the ranks of the enemy causing a great tumult and, under the ferocious blows of those terrible monkeys, the hideous rangers of the night fell, overwhelmed by trees on the battlefield.

Beholding his forces thus roughly handled by the monkeys, Indrajita, enraged, surrounded by his divisions, advanced towards them loosing a quantity of arrows and that intrepid warrior struck down the foremost of the monkeys in great numbers.

Furnished with spears, rocks, swords, harpoons, picks and maces, the monkeys, on their side, annihilated his companions in the struggle, and the exceedingly valiant Hanuman made use of huge trunks and branches of trees, stones and rocks to exterminate those titans of terrible exploits.

Having thrown back the enemy forces, Hanuman said to his troops :—" We have acted in order to please Rama at the risk of our lives but she, for whom we have fought, the daughter of Janaka, is dead ! Having informed Rama and Sugriva of this on our return, we will do whatever they command ".

Thus spoke that monkey general and heroically calling in his troops, he returned slowly with them.

Meanwhile, seeing Hanuman going to rejoin Raghava, the wicked Indrajita, desiring to offer oblations, went to the sacrificial altar of Nikumbhila and, reaching that place, he invoked the God of Fire, Pavaka. Having entered the place of sacrifice at the instance of the titans, Indrajita began to pour on the libations, and the fire blazed up, consuming the oblations and blood, and Agni, effulgent, sparkling and satisfied, resembled the setting sun.

Thereafter Indrajita poured libations on the earth for the prosperity of the titans, according to the rites in which he was well versed and, beholding this, the titans, instructed in what was fitting and unfitting, stood round in great numbers.

CHAPTER 83

Lakshmana's Speech

MEANWHILE in that fight between the titans and the monkeys, Raghava, hearing the formidable tumult, said to Jambavan :—

" O Friend, to judge by the fearful uproar and the clamour of the combatants, Hanuman is performing an exceedingly difficult feat at this moment. Go, attended by thine army, O Leader of the Bears, and lend thine aid to that Prince of Monkeys who is engaged in combat ! "

" Be it so ! " said the King of the Bears, and thereafter, surrounded by his troops, he advanced to the western gate to join Hanuman and that Lord of the Bears beheld Hanuman returning amidst his monkeys who had given up the fight and were lamenting. Beholding the host of bears, resembling a dark and fearful cloud, Hanuman caused them to halt and retrace their steps. Then that illustrious warrior, in company with those troops, speedily returned to seek out Rama and, full of grief, addressed him saying :—

" Whilst we were fighting, under our very eyes, Indrajita, born of Ravana, slew Sita who was weeping, O Destroyer of thy Foes and, my mind being afflicted by this spectacle, in despair I have come to inform thee of what has taken place ! "

Hearing these tidings, Raghava, overcome with sorrow, fell to the earth like a tree whose roots have been severed and, beholding the son of Raghu, who was like a God, lying on the ground, the monkey leaders from all sides rushed towards him as he lay consumed with the violence of his grief, resembling a fire that has suddenly been ignited ; and they sprinkled him with water that was fragrant with the scent of blue and white lotuses.

Then Lakshmana, full of anguish, pressed him in his arms and addressed the half-conscious Rama, in words pregnant with reason and penetration, saying :—

" O Thou who walkest in the path of virtue, O My Noble Brother, though thou hast mastered thy senses yet righteousness

has not been able to preserve thee from misfortune! I see the form of that which is animate and inanimate but not the form of dharma, hence in mine opinion, it does not exist! Inanimate objects may be seen and also those which are animate but the spiritual law is not manifest, else the virtuous such as thou would not suffer adversity! If unrighteousness brought evil in its train, then Ravana would now be in hell and thou, who art virtuous, wouldst not be afflicted by ill-fortune. Meanwhile calamity spares the titan in order to strike thee down, which proves the consequences of righteousness and unrighteousness to be reversed! If virtue produced good results and unrighteousness evil ones, then those (like Ravana), who have forsaken virtue, would suffer evil consequences. Those who never take pleasure in ill-doing should not be robbed of felicity since their every delight is in doing good; those who follow righteousness should pluck the fruits thereof. Since prosperity attends on those in whom unrighteousness abides and those, who make virtue their way of life, are afflicted, these words (vice and virtue) have no meaning! O Raghava, if the evil-doer perished through his own unrighteousness, unrighteousness itself would perish through its own evil and, it being destroyed, how could it destroy? If it be through the decree of destiny that a man is slain or slays another, then it is destiny and not the slayer who is at fault. O Thou, Slayer of thy Foes, since one is unable to discern the law of dharma meting out retribution or behold its form and it is as if it were not, how is it possible to attain the highest by means of dharma? If dharma truly existed, O King, O Most Virtuous of Men, then thou wouldst not have suffered this misfortune; it is therefore manifest that this law is meaningless! Dharma, being weak and powerless, attaches itself to the strong and, because of its weakness, rubs out any difference between itself and vice, therefore, in mine opinion, one should disregard it. If unrighteousness is merely the result of strength, then abandon it since might is right. But if, as some hold, dharma is loyalty to one's word, O Scourge of thy Foes, then thy sire is guilty of adharma in the duplicity and cruelty he meted out to thee without reason! If one accepts the existence of righteousness, then Indra, the Bearer of the Thunderbolt, God of a Hundred Sacrifices, was not justified in performing a

sacrifice after slaying the Ascetic Vishvarupa. If righteousness gives birth to unrighteousness, it must perish, O Raghava! Men will act accordingly to their whim, O Kakutstha. In mine opinion, O beloved Raghava, dharma has indeed been destroyed; thou hast severed its roots by abandoning thy kingdom! Like streams from the mountains, all success is brought to birth by material prosperity. The man of small intelligence, without resources, sees all his deeds come to nought as trickles of water drying up in the hot season. Renouncing wealth when one is accustomed to the advantages in which one is reared, is an error of judgment and is setting out on the wrong path. He who has wealth has friends and kinsfolk; he who has wealth is verily a man of importance; he who has wealth is a wise man. The wealthy man is brave, the wealthy man is wise, the wealthy man is powerful, above all the wealthy man is a man of worth! O Hero, I have pointed out the disadvantages that result from giving up one's good fortune, I see no reason for thy determination to abandon the crown.

"He who possesses a fortune finds virtue, pleasure and prosperity to be at his disposal; the poor man who seeks wealth, cannot attain it and merely dreams of it. Wealth is the creator of joy, pleasure, pride, anger, and inner and outer control; all these come from wealth, O Foremost of Men! Prosperity eludes virtuous men and those who pursue the path of duty in this world, nor can it be discerned any more than the stars in a stormy sky! Whilst, in accordance with thy sire's command, thou didst live in exile, O Hero, a titan bore away thy consort who is dearer to thee than life itself.

"O Hero, by my valour I shall be able to dissipate this great grief that Indrajita has caused thee to-day, O Raghava, arise therefore, rise up, O Lion among Men, O Long-armed Warrior, who art fixed in thy vows! Dost thou not know that thou art the Self, the Highest Self?

"Here am I, O Irreproachable Hero, at thy command! The tidings of the death of the daughter of Janaka enrages me! With my shafts I shall overwhelm Lanka, its chariots, horses, titans and its king."

CHAPTER 84

Bibishana consoles Rama

WHILST Lakshmana, in his fraternal affection, was consoling Rama, Bibishana, who had been restoring order in the ranks, came to that place.

Four warriors, armed with various weapons, escorted him and they resembled heaps of black collyrium and were like unto the leaders of elephant herds. Then that hero approaching, beheld Raghava plunged in affliction, as also the monkeys themselves, whose eyes were full of tears, and he saw the great-souled Raghava, the joy of the Ikshvaku Race, stunned with burning grief, whereupon Bibishana, his heart pierced with anguish, enquired :—" How is this ? "

Then Lakshmana, seeing Bibishana, Sugriva and the monkeys, uttered these impetuous words :—

" Indrajita has slain Sita ! Hearing these tidings from Hanuman's lips, Raghava has been overwhelmed with despair, O My Friend ! "

As Saumitri was still speaking, Bibishana interrupted him and addressed Rama, whose mind was agitated, in words fraught with good sense, saying :—

" O Indra among Men, that which thou hast heard spoken by Hanuman with a sorrowful mien, seems to me as probable as the drying up of the sea ! I am fully conversant with the wicked Ravana's design ; assuredly he would never permit Sita to be ill-treated, O Long-armed Warrior ! Though constantly pressed by me, who desired his welfare, to release Vaidehi, he would never listen to me. Neither by persuasion nor threats, conciliation nor gifts nor by sowing dissension, has anyone been able to behold Sita, how much less by force of arms ? It was in order to deceive the monkeys that Indrajita set out to meet them again ; this seeming daughter of Janaka is the effect of illusion, O Long-armed Warrior.

" To-day Indrajita is going to the sacrificial ground of Nikumbhila to offer an oblation. Having performed the

sacrifice, on leaving, the son of Ravana will be invincible in battle even to the Gods led by Vasava. It is he, in the role of a skilled magician, who has made use of this illusion in order to undermine the courage of the monkeys. Let us leave now with our forces ere he accomplishes his object. Shake off the distress that has visited thee on this account, O Lion among Men! The whole army is dispirited on beholding the grief that overwhelms thee. Come, pluck up courage, rise, call up thy valour and command Lakshmana to join with us and the troops which we command.

"With his whetted shafts, that lion among men will compel Ravani to break off his sacrifice, after which he may be slain. Thy brother's sharp and penetrating arrows, that fly on wings and resemble birds of prey, will drink his blood. O Long-armed Warrior, let Lakshmana, who is endowed with auspicious marks, bear down on that titan in order to destroy him, as Indra looses his thunderbolt. O Best of Men, it is not fitting to defer the slaying of a foe; now suffer Lakshmana to fall on thine adversary speedily in order to slay him, as Mahadeva looses his thunderbolt on the enemies of the Gods in order to exterminate them."

CHAPTER 85

Lakshmana goes to the Nikumbhila Grove to fight Indrajita

THUS did the titan speak, but Raghava, who was overwhelmed with grief, did not fully comprehend what was said to him. Thereafter, having regained his strength, Rama, the Conqueror of Hostile Citadels, answered Bibishana, who was seated at his side, saying:—

"O Bibishana, Prince of the Nairritas, I desire to hear once more what thou hast said to me; do thou repeat what I long to know."

Hearing these words of Raghava, Bibishana, skilled in discourse, repeated that which he had already told him, saying:—

"The behests thou didst lay upon me, O Long-armed Warrior, regarding the disposal of the forces, have been carried

out scrupulously; the divisions of the army are drawn up on all sides and the leaders have each had their posts allotted to them. O Mighty Lord, now hear what I have to impart further.

"O Prince, beholding thee afflicted, we are discouraged; abandon thy distress, that grief which conduces to the joy of the foe afar off! Take courage, O Hero, and destroy the rangers of the night! May felicity be thine, since thou art to be re-united with Sita! O Joy of the House of Raghu, listen to my sage counsel! Let Saumitri set out bravely at the head of a considerable force and converge on the Nikumbhila Grove, in order to slay Ravani in combat by the aid of arrows, resembling venomous snakes, loosed from his bow!

"That warrior,[1] on account of his asceticism received a marvellous boon, the Brahmashira Weapon, from Swyambhu and also steeds that course at his will; he has undoubtedly reached the Nikumbhila Grove with his forces! If he succeeds in carrying through the sacrifice, know that we are lost!

"'The foe who strikes thee ere thou hast reached the Nikumbhila Grove and ignited the fire, armed as thou art, will bring about thy death, O Enemy of Indra!' Such were the words pronounced by the Lord of the World and thus was the end of that crafty titan ordained! O Rama, send thy powerful brother to slay Indrajita and, he being slain, Ravana with his friends is also slain!"

Bibishana having spoken thus, Rama answered him saying:—

"O Thou, whose prowess is truth, I know the magic power of that barbarian; his knowledge of the Brahma Weapon endows that skilful and great magician with immense power so that he is able to deprive the Gods and Varuna himself of consciousness in combat! While he ranges the sky in his chariot, O Illustrious Prince, one is no more able to follow his course than that of the sun in the midst of heavy cloud!"

Then Raghava, who was conversant with the magic power of that crafty foe, said to Lakshmana who shone with effulgence:—

"Go with the entire army of the Lord of the Monkeys with its generals and Hanuman at their head, O Lakshmana; take the army of the bears with their leader Jambavan, and destroy the titan possessed of the power of magic. This magnanimous

[1] Indrajita.

night-ranger[1] will follow thee with his ministers in order that thou mayest fall upon that master of illusion."

Hearing these words of Raghava, Lakshmana of redoubtable courage, who was accompanied by Bibishana, took up his rare bow, the foremost of all, and donning his mail, furnished with a sword and arrows, and full of joy, addressed him thus :—

"To-day the arrows loosed from my bow, having pierced Ravani, will lay Lanka waste as herons ravage a lotus pool! This very day the shafts speeding from my bow will pierce the body of that barbarian!"

Having spoken thus to his brother, the illustrious Lakshmana, eager to slay Ravani, departed with all speed and, having paid obeisance to the feet of his elder brother and circumambulated him, he set out for the Nikumbhila Grove, the place of sacrifice, where Ravani was to be found. Followed by Bibishana, Prince Lakshmana, burning with courage, with the good wishes of his brother, hastened away. Then Hanuman, at the head of countless monkeys and Bibishana with his counsellors speedily followed in his wake.

Whilst the great hosts of monkeys threw themselves in his train, Lakshmana beheld the forces of the King of the Bears stationed in the way. Thereafter Sumitra's son, the joy of his friends, having already covered a great distance, observed the army of the King of the Titans ranged for battle and, bow in hand, that conqueror of his foes, the joy of the House of Raghu, coming upon that skilful magician, prepared to enter into combat with him in conformity with Brahma's ordinance, and that prince, who was full of ardour, was accompanied by Bibishana, the valiant Angada and also the son of Anila.

Thereafter Lakshmana, as one entering into darkness, penetrated into the ranks of the countless enemy host that was exceedingly formidable, blazing with its glittering weapons and shaded by its dense rows of mighty chariots with their standards.

[1] Bibishana.

CHAPTER 86

Indrajita breaks off his Sacrifice to fight with Lakshmana

As these events were taking place, the younger brother of Ravana[1] gave the following counsel to Lakshmana, which was advantageous to his undertaking but detrimental to his foes, saying :—

"Armed with rocks, throw thyself with thy monkeys on the army of the titan which is now visible and resembles a dark cloud. Seek to overthrow them, O Lakshmana, for the son of that Indra of the Titans will become visible the instant the ranks are broken. With thine arrows, that equal Indra's thunderbolt, assail the enemy; enter into the fray with all speed ere the sacrifice be completed. O Warrior, triumph over that perverse but skilled magician, the wicked Ravani of ruthless exploits, the terror of the worlds ! "

At these words of Bibishana, Lakshmana, endowed with auspicious marks, let loose a rain of shafts on the son of the Lord of the Titans. Thereafter the bears and monkeys in a body, arming themselves with huge trees, rushed on the army of the titans which was drawn up in battle array and which, with sharp darts, swords, picks and spears hurled itself on the simian battalions eager to overcome them.

Thereupon a desperate struggle ensued between monkeys and titans and the city re-echoed with the mighty tumult. Missiles of every kind, whetted darts, trees and mountain peaks sped through the air in dreadful wise so that the sky was obscured and innumerable titans, possessed of monstrous arms and faces, hurled their weapons on the foremost of the monkeys, creating extreme terror amongst them, whilst, from their side, the monkeys struck the titans with whole trees and crags, crushing them in the struggle. And the foremost of the bears and monkeys, of immense stature, created great terror among the titans with whom they fought. Learning that his army, overwhelmed by their foes, was losing ground, the invincible

[1] Bibishana.

Indrajita arose, the sacrificial rites as yet uncompleted and, leaving the Nikumbhila Grove, that was darkened by trees, Ravani, enraged, ascended his chariot that stood ready harnessed and fully equipped; with his bow and arrows, he was formidable and resembled a heap of black collyrium, terrifying to behold with his reddened eyes, like unto Mrityu the Destroyer.

Beholding him standing in his chariot and the titan host ranged round about him, rushing to attack Lakshmana with fury, Hanuman, the scourge of his foes, who resembled a mountain, uprooted a huge tree, difficult to wield and, like unto Kala's consuming fire, that monkey, with repeated blows, struck down the enemy on the battlefield where they lay insensible.

Seeing the son of Pavana creating confusion in the ranks, thousands of titans attacked him with spears, those bearing lances with lances, those with swords with blows of their swords and those with harpoons with blows of harpoons. Iron bars, maces, sticks in their hundreds, Shataghnis,[1] iron hammers, terrible axes, Bhindipalas, blows from their fists like unto lightning, slaps sounding like thunder, were all delivered at Hanuman, who like unto a mountain in stature, in his rage, created a terrible carnage.

Then Indrajita beheld the foremost of the monkeys, the intrepid son of Pavana, like unto a rock, destroying his adversaries and, addressing his charioteer, he said :—

" Drive towards that monkey; he will certainly destroy all the titans if he is suffered to do so ! "

At this command, the driver set his course at Maruti and drove the invincible Indrajita, who was standing in the chariot, upon him. Then that redoubtable titan, drawing near, let fall arrows, blows from his sword, harpoons, spears and axes on the head of that monkey, so that those formidable missiles that fell upon him threw Maruti into a transport of rage and he said :—

" O Perverse Son of Ravana, if thou hast any claim to valour, then fight; with thy two arms strive with me ! O Insensate One, if thou dost withstand my might, thou shalt be accounted as the foremost of the titans ! "

Then Bibishana pointed out the son of Ravana, to Lakshmana, as he, with bow upraised, sought to slay Hanuman, and said :—

[1] See Glossary of Weapons.

"The Conqueror of Vasava, the son of Ravana, standing in his car, is about to slay Hanuman! O Saumitri, do thou slay Ravani with thy formidable arrows of incomparable workmanship, the destroyers of their foes, that put an end to their lives!"

Hearing Bibishana's words, that magnanimous one, a veritable Bibishana,[1] looked on Indrajita of dreadful prowess, who, standing in his chariot, was invincible and resembled a mountain.

CHAPTER 87

Indrajita and Bibishanà denounce each other

HAVING spoken thus, Bibishana, delighted, taking Saumitri, who bore his bow in his hand, hastened away. Proceeding some distance, they entered a great wood where Bibishana pointed out Indrajita's place of sacrifice to Lakshmana and the illustrious brother of Ravana showed Saumitri a huge Nyagrodha Tree of fearful aspect, resembling a dark cloud, and said:—

"It is here that the powerful son of Ravana offers up his victims and thereafter enters into combat. Becoming invisible to all creatures, the titan overthrows his enemies in the fight, paralysing them with his excellent shafts. Do thou pierce the valiant son of Ravana, his chariot, steeds and charioteer with thy flaming darts ere he reaches the Nyagrodha Tree!"

"Be it so!" replied the mighty Saumitri, the delight of his friends and, taking his stand, he drew his marvellous bow.

Thereafter Indrajita, the powerful son of Ravana appeared before them in his chariot, that shone like fire, clad in armour with his sword and banner. Burning with ardour, Lakshmana challenged that invincible descendant of Poulastya, saying:—

"I challenge thee to combat! Let it be in fair fight!"

Thus accosted, the brave and exceedingly energetic Indrajita, observing Bibishana, overwhelmed him with reproaches, saying:—

"O Thou, born and bred in this race, the brother of my sire, why dost thou seek to harm his son, O My Paternal Uncle, O

[1] Bibishana—One who inspires terror.

Titan? For thee, O Wretch, there is neither tradition, brotherly feeling nor a sense of duty! O Impious One, Thou art to be pitied! O Perverse Being, thou art the object of reproach to the virtuous, thou who didst abandon thine own kind in order to seek service with the enemy. Is it not a want of intelligence in thee, that thou dost not discern the great difference between living with one's kindred and seeking a miserable refuge with strangers? Even if a stranger be endowed with every quality and a relation bereft of them all, yet the kinsman, though wanting in all merit, is to be preferred; a stranger is always a stranger! He who renounces his own kind to follow another will perish under the blows of the enemy after his own kinsfolk have been destroyed. Thou alone art capable of such ruthlessness and so relentless an attitude to thy kind, O Ranger of the Night, O Younger Brother of Ravana!"

Thus addressed by his brother's son, Bibishana answered:—

"Art thou ignorant of my character that thou dost reproach me thus, O Titan? O Perverse Prince, do not insult me but treat me with respect. Albeit I have been born in the race of titans, I possess those principles which appertain to men, my nature is not that of the demons! Nay, I do not delight in cruelty nor does injustice find favour with me but, even if his character be dissimilar, how can a brother banish his own brother? The one, who rejects him who renounces his duty and is bent on evil-doing, is assured of good fortune, as one who shakes off a snake from his hand. One is told to fly that perverse wretch who habitually purloins his neighbour's goods and has intercourse with other's wives, as one would flee from a burning dwelling.

"To take possession of another's property or to look with desire on his neighbour's wife or to distrust one's friends are the three faults that lead to destruction! The ruthless slaughter of the great sages, the war on the Gods, arrogance, anger, hate and self-will are the defects of my brother, who is destroying himself and his empire, obscuring his good qualities as clouds veil the mountains. It is on account of his vices that I abandoned my brother, whose son thou art. Thou, thy father and Lanka are doomed! O Titan, Thou art a mere boy possessed of an overweening pride and art ill-mannered! Say what thou wilt to me, thou art caught in the noose of death! Thou shalt suffer the

penalty thou hast merited for the harsh reproaches thou hast made to me this day! From henceforth thou shalt not be able to approach the Nyagrodha Tree, O Vilest of the Titans! Having outraged Kakutstha, thou canst not survive! Enter into combat with this God among men! Fall on the field of battle and go to the abode of Yama to the satisfaction of the Gods! Display thy prowess, exhaust thy weapons and missiles but if thou approachest within the range of Lakshmana's shafts, thou and thine army shalt not return alive!"

CHAPTER 88

The Combat between Lakshmana and Indrajita

HEARING Bibishana's words, Indrajita, seething with anger, answered him with fresh invectives and advanced upon him in fury. Standing in his richly decorated chariot, that was yoked to black steeds, his weapons and sword upraised, bearing his mighty, pliant and terrible bow and his arrows that were fatal to the foe, he resembled the Destroyer, Death Himself.

Then Lakshmana in all his splendour appeared before that mighty archer standing in his car, decked with ornaments, the slayer of his foes, the valiant son of Ravana, and, transported with fury, Indrajita addressed Saumitri, who was seated on Hanuman's back and resembled the rising sun, and Bibishana also and the foremost of the monkeys, saying:—

"Do ye all behold my prowess! In an instant, a rain of arrows speeding from mine irresistible bow will fall upon you in the fight like unto a shower of rain from the sky! Soon the shafts loosed from my great bow will scatter your limbs as the wind a heap of cotton! Pierced by my sharp darts, spears, lances, daggers and other weapons, this day I shall send you all to the abode of Yama! When, roaring like a thundercloud, I scatter the waves of mine arrows with a steady hand in the fray, who can stand before me?

"Formerly in a night engagement, with my darts that are equal to thunderbolts, I overthrew you both, leaving you

unconscious with your escort; hast thou forgotten it? Since thou desirest to measure thy strength with mine, I who in my fury resemble a venomous reptile, I deem thou art anxious to enter the region of death!"

Hearing the taunts of Ravani, that Indra among the Titans, the son of Raghu replied indignantly:—

"It is not easy to succeed in those undertakings of which thou dost boast and, in fact, he who accomplishes his end, alone is skilful! O Thou whose situation is desperate, thou deemest to have attained thy purpose in this enterprise which is untenable from every aspect, merely by saying I have accomplished mine end! O Insensate One, rendering thyself invisible on the field of battle is the procedure of a rogue; honest men do not practice it! Since I am within the range of thy shafts, O Titan, manifest thy prowess; of what use is this bragging?"

Thus addressed, Indrajita who was ever victorious in combat, stretched his dread bow and with a powerful arm let fly his whetted shafts on his adversary. Discharged by him, those swift arrows resembling venomous snakes, struck Lakshmana hissing like serpents, and the impetuous son of Ravana, Indrajita, with those arrows of extreme velocity, overwhelmed Saumitri, who was endowed with auspicious marks, whereupon the fortunate Lakshmana, his limbs pierced by those darts, covered in blood, shone like a smokeless flame!

Meanwhile Indrajita, contemplating his feat, advanced, emitting an exceedingly loud cry and said:—

"O Saumitri, the feathered shafts loosed upon thee from my bow will rob thee of thy life, for their impact is mortal! This very day, O Lakshmana, bands of jackals, eagles and vultures will descend upon thee when thou hast fallen unconscious under my blows! Rama of perverse soul will see thee, his devoted brother, struck down by mine arm, thine armour shattered, thy bow in pieces, thy head severed, thou who art a warrior by birth only!"

To these insolent words of Ravana's son, the sagacious Lakshmana replied in measured and judicious terms, saying:—

"Cease from boasting, O Wretched Titan of crooked ways, what purpose is served by vain speech? Demonstrate thy valour in action; thou dost vaunt thine exploits ere thou hast accomplished them! To what end, O Titan? Act in such a way that

I may believe in thine utterances! Mark how, without addressing a single word of contempt or provocation to thee and without bragging, I shall slay thee, O Last of Warriors!"

Thus speaking, Lakshmama, with five Narachas loosed with great force from his bow, which he stretched up to his ear, struck the titan full in the breast and those feathered shafts of swift flight, resembling fiery serpents, shone in the breast of the Nairrita like the rays of the sun.

Struck by those darts, the son of Ravana, enraged, in his turn, pierced Lakshmana with three well-aimed arrows. Thereupon an appalling and fearful exchange of blows ensued between those lions among men and titans, who sought to triumph over each other. Valiant and endowed with strength, both courageous by nature, each found it hard to overcome the other, neither having his equal in energy and prowess. Resembling two planets coursing through the heavens, those two heroes strove, so that they seemed like those two invincible warriors, Bala and Vritra, struggling proudly like two lions, standing immoveable as they showered innumerable darts on each other, and that King of Men and Prince of the Titans fought on with extreme ardour.

CHAPTER 89

Lakshmana and Indrajita continue to fight

MEANWHILE the son of Dasaratha, slayer of his foes, arming himself with arrows, loosed them in fury on that Indra of Titans and at that twanging of his bow-string, the titan leader, his countenance ashen, fixed his gaze on Lakshmana.

Bibishana beholding the blenched features of the son of Ravana, said to Saumitri who was engaged in combat:—

"O Long-armed Warrior, I behold inauspicious signs round Ravana's son, hasten therefore for he is assuredly nearing his end!"

Thereupon Saumitri, selecting some arrows resembling venomous snakes, let fly those barbed shafts like unto exceedingly poisonous serpents on Indrajita and he, struck by those missiles like unto thunderbolts hurled on him by Lakshmana, was dazed

awhile, his senses stupefied. Thereafter, beholding the valiant son of Dasaratha standing in the field, he flung himself upon him, his eyes red with anger and, drawing near, he began to taunt him afresh, saying :—

" How is it that thou hast forgotten my prowess, when at the first encounter thou and thy brother were bound and laid low, thou who dost now seek to enter into combat with me anew? In that great struggle under mine arrows resembling thunderbolts, both of you with your followers were first felled to the earth by me and then deprived of your senses.

" Meseems it has escaped thy memory! Since thou hast dared to challenge me, it is clear thou desirest to enter the abode of Yama! If, at the first assault thou didst fail to recognize my superior strength, I shall soon demonstrate it to thee; stay therefore and face me with resolution!"

Speaking thus, he pierced Lakshmana with seven arrows and Hanuman with ten powerful whetted shafts; thereafter with re-doubled fury, Indrajita pierced Bibishana with a hundred well-aimed darts. Seeing this, the younger brother of Rama, unmoved, began to laugh, saying :—

" This is nothing!" and that lion among men, Lakshmana, undaunted, taking up some dreadful darts, hurled them in anger on Ravani in the fight, saying :—

" Nay, it is not thus armed that warriors enter the fray, O Night Ranger! Thy darts are trifling and without power, conducing to mine ease; it is undoubtedly not in this wise that brave men fight!"

With these words, he, from his bow, loosed a shower of arrows on his adversary. Shattered by Lakshmana's shafts, the heavy golden armour of the titan fell to pieces on the floor of the chariot, like a mass of stars falling from the sky. His coat of mail riven, riddled with wounds inflicted by Narachas, the valiant Indrajita resembled the rising sun and, full of ire, the courageous son of Ravana of redoubtable valour, struck Lakshmana with a thousand shafts, cleaving his celestial armour. Then, exchanging blow for blow, they rushed on each other and breathing heavily, engaged in a terrible struggle and, in the twinkling of an eye, their limbs were lacerated by arrows and from every part of their bodies the blood flowed.

For a long time these two valiant warriors tore each other with their sharp weapons and, in their unbridled energy, the two skilled combatants sought to overcome each other. Both riddled with a mass of arrows, their armour and standards shattered, they caused the hot blood to flow, as waterfalls let loose their torrents, and they let a dreadful hail of missiles fly with a great clamour, like unto the dark destructive clouds of doom, loosing their floods from the sky.

For a long time they fought thus without turning back or experiencing any fatigue and those foremost of archers let fly their shafts again and again, and the multi-shaped darts crossed and re-crossed each other in the air. With agility, speed and grace, the struggle between man and titan continued with an appalling din and each, on his side, raised a tremendous clamour inspiring terror, like unto a fearful tempest and the sound of those two redoubtable warriors in desperate combat resembled two clouds clashing in the sky. With golden-footed Narachas, those two warriors, sought to overcome one another, inflicting wounds from which rivers of blood flowed and from their pierced bodies the golden-hafted arrows, covered with blood, fell to the earth in which they buried themselves. By thousands their whetted shafts converged in the sky, cleaving and riving each other, and both let fall a formidable mass of darts in the struggle, so that they appeared like heaps of Kusha Grass destined for two sacrificial fires. The bodies of those illustrious heroes, full of wounds, shone like a Kimshuka or a Shalmali Tree, leaf-less and in full flower in the forest; and the impact was appalling, as Indrajita and Lakshmana fought, each desirous of overcoming the other.

Lakshmana battled with Ravani and Ravani with Lakshmana, each striking the other without ceasing and the streams of arrows buried in their flesh gave those two powerful warriors the appearance of two hills covered with trees, and their limbs streaming with blood, riddled with arrows, shone like two fires.

Thus did they fight for a long time without turning back in combat or giving way to exhaustion. Nevertheless, in order to allow the invincible Lakshmana, ever in the forefront of the fight, to overcome the fatigue of combat, the magnanimous Bibishana threw himself into the fray remaining near him to lend him his support.

CHAPTER 90

Indrajita loses his Charioteer, Chariot and Horses

SEEING the desperate struggle between man and titan, who resembled two elephants with broken tusks desirous of overcoming each other, Ravana's valiant brother, curious to behold the outcome of the duel, stood in the forefront of the battle, his excellent bow in his hand.

Standing erect, he stretched his great bow, letting fly long and pointed arrows on the titans and these shafts of burning impact, falling thick and fast, tore the demons to pieces as a thunderbolt rives the high mountains.

Then, in their turn, Bibishana's followers, the foremost of warriors, arming themselves with maces, swords and harpoons, struck the valiant titans in the fight and, surrounded by his companions, Bibishana resembled a full-grown elephant in the midst of young tuskers pressing close to him.

In order to encourage the monkeys, whose dearest wish was to slaughter their foes, Bibishana, the foremost of the titans, conversant with what was fitting to the occasion, uttered these pertinent words to them, saying :—

" Indrajita is the sole support of the King of the Titans and this is all that is left of his army, why therefore, O Foremost of the Monkeys, have you relaxed your efforts ? This wicked wretch being slain in the fore-front of battle, all the titan warriors, save Ravana, have been slain ! The valiant Prahasta is dead and the all-powerful Nikumbha also, Kumbhakarna, Kumbha, Dhumraksha, Jambumali, Mahamali, Tikshnavega, Ashaniprabha, Suptagna, Yajnakopa, Vajradamshtra, Samhradin, Vikata, Arighna, Tapana and Mainda, Praghasa as well as Prajangha and Jangha, Agniketu, Durdharsha, Rashmiketu who was full of energy, Vidyujjihva, Dvijihva and Akampana, Suparshva, Shakramali, Kampana, Devantaka and Narantaka who was full of valour. By slaying all these countless and exceedingly powerful titans, you have swum the ocean and now

it is for you but to cross the hoof mark of a cow. Attack the titans who still remain, O Monkeys; all these warriors, whose strength has filled them with pride, have perished in the fight. It is not fitting for me to slay my father's son, but, laying aside all pity for Rama's sake, I will put an end to my brother's offspring; yet though I desire to slay him, tears fill mine eyes and deter me; the long-armed Lakshmana will best know how to subdue him! O Monkeys, closing in upon him, place yourselves so that you may wipe out those who stand near to him."

Thus incited by the exceedingly illustrious titan, the foremost of the monkeys demonstrated their delight by lashing their tails, and thereafter those tigers among the Plavamgamas, amidst repeated clapping of hands, emitted every kind of cry, like peacocks on beholding the clouds.

Jambavan too was surrounded by his leaders and their forces and they assailed the titans with their nails and teeth and blows from stones. Thereafter that Lord of the Bears decimated the titans, who, banishing all fear, full of vigour, overwhelmed him with countless missiles such as darts, axes, sharp pikes, lances and spears, striking him, their exterminator, in the fray.

Thereupon a formidable conflict ensued between monkeys and titans, like unto the fearful contest between the Gods and the Asuras fired with wrath, and Hanuman, enraged, broke off a mountain peak and having caused Lakshmana to dismount, slew the titans in their thousands. Meanwhile after a fearful combat with his maternal uncle, the valiant Indrajita, slayer of his foes, threw himself afresh on Lakshmana and a desperate duel arose between those two heroes amidst the general conflict. Then those valiant warriors let loose a rain of missiles with which they overwhelmed each other and, in the twinkling of an eye, they disappeared under a hail of arrows, as the glowing sun and the brightness of the moon under clouds at the end of summer. Their movements were so swift that one was unable to perceive when they took up their bows or stretched them or changed hands or loosed their shafts or selected or separated them or when they closed their fists or took aim and launched a succession of arrows with force, filling the sky on every side, nor was any object distinguishable. Lakshmana struck Ravani and Ravani, in his turn, struck Lakshmana and a general confusion

arose between them during the combat. Barbed and pointed shafts, loosed by those two warriors, filled the space in the heavens as it were and those whetted darts, that fell in hundreds, spread over the cardinal points and the intermediate regions, so that everything was engulfed in darkness and extreme terror took possession of all beings.

Then the orb of a thousand rays sank behind the Asta Mountains enveloped in shadow, and torrents of blood flowed that day and fearful beasts of prey emitted full-throated howls.

" May good fortune befall the worlds ! " murmured the great Rishis, whilst the Gandharvas with the Charanas, panic-stricken, fled away.

Meanwhile Saumitri with four arrows pierced the four black steeds caparisoned in gold of that Indra among the Titans, and, with the aid of a sharp, yellow, shining and terrible Bhalla, furnished with beautiful plumes, resembling Mahendra's thunderbolt, resounding like the clang of a gauntlet hurled with full force, that mighty son of Raghu severed the head of the charioteer from his shoulders while he circled round.

Thereupon, his charioteer slain, Mandodari's valiant son seized the reins himself, taking up his bow ; and it was marvellous to behold him driving his chariot as he fought. Yet while his hands were occupied with the steeds, his adversary struck him with pointed darts and while he attended to his bow, the horses were pierced with arrows. Then Indrajita, even though his horses were riddled with darts, caused them to circle bravely under the arrows loosed by Saumitri with exceeding lightness of hand. Seeing his charioteer slain in the fight however, the son of Ravana lost his zest for combat and grew anxious, and observing the titan's countenance change, the monkey leaders began to acclaim Lakshmana in the height of joy. Thereafter Pramathin, Rabhasa, Sharabha and Gandhamadana, eager to bring matters to a close, struck a mighty blow, and those foremost of monkeys, endowed with extreme vigour and remarkable valour, with a rapid bound, threw themselves on the four magnificent steeds of Indrajita.

Under the weight of those monkeys who resembled mountains, the horses threw up torrents of blood and thereafter, crushed and mangled, fell lifeless on the earth. Having slain the

titan's steeds and shattered his chariot, the monkeys, with a further bound, returned to Lakshmana's side.

Springing from his car, the horses having perished, and his charioteer being slain, Ravani caused a shower of darts to fall on Saumitri, whereupon, like unto Mahendra, Lakshmana overwhelmed Indrajita with shafts and he, fighting on foot, his excellent steeds being dead, loosed countless whetted and marvellous darts on Saumitri in the fight.

CHAPTER 91

The Death of Indrajita

THE mighty Ranger of the Night, Indrajita, his horses slain, stood in the field in a paroxysm of fury, flaming with valour, and in their desire to triumph, those two archers, armed with bows, hurled themselves against one another like two mighty elephants in the forest.

Rushing this way and that, titans and monkeys slew each other, not wishing to abandon their leaders. At that moment, the son of Ravana began to encourage the titans and praised and gladdened them by addressing them thus :—

" O Foremost of the Titans, a profound darkness reigns over all regions nor can we distinguish between ourselves and the enemy, therefore fight fearlessly in order to delude the monkeys and I too shall return to enter into combat in another chariot ! O Brave Companions, do not suffer the monkeys to triumph whilst I am in the city ! "

At these words, the son of Ravana, slayer of his foes, eluding the vigilance of the dwellers in the woods, re-entered the City of Lanka, in order to provide himself with a fresh chariot ; and he caused a car embellished with magnificent gilding, furnished with javelins, swords and arrows, harnessed to the most excellent of steeds and driven by a skilful and intelligent charioteer to be made ready, whereafter the illustrious Ravani, victor in combat, ascended it. Surrounded by the foremost of battalions, the

valiant son of Mandodari, Indrajita, urged on by the force of destiny, left the city and, drawn by swift steeds, with exceeding courage he rushed on Lakshmana and Bibishana who accompanied him.

Beholding the crafty son of Ravana, mounted in a chariot, Saumitri, the intrepid monkeys and the Titan Bibishana were astonished; Indrajita, however, struck down the foremost of the monkeys with fury. Under the clouds of arrows falling in hundreds and thousands, Ravani, victorious in combat, stretching his bow to a circle, slew the monkeys in his wrath, displaying his extreme skill, and the monkeys, overwhelmed by the Narachas of dreadful impetus, took refuge with Saumitri, as all beings with Prajapati. Thereupon, inflamed with martial ardour, that descendant of Raghu severed the bow of Indrajita, thus demonstrating his fleetness of hand but he, seizing hold of another, hastened to string it, yet Laksnmana shattered it also with three arrows and, having broken his weapons thus, Saumitri pierced Ravani's breast with five darts like unto venomous snakes. Then these shafts, leaving that great bow, having entered Indrajita's body, fell to the earth like huge red serpents.

His weapon severed, vomiting blood, Ravani took hold of another powerful bow with its stout cord and, aiming at Lakshmana, with extreme speed caused a shower of missiles to fall upon him, like unto Purandara letting loose his floods. Yet, irresistible as that hail of arrows, poured down by Indrajita was, Lakshmana, the Conqueror of his Foes, standing immoveable, repelled them.

Thus did Ravani witness Lakshmana's marvellous prowess, he who was the intrepid and valiant son of Raghu. Thereafter Lakshmana, in fury, pierced each of those titans with three shafts in the fight, manifesting the velocity of his arrows, and Indrajita, on his side, riddled him with a hail of shafts.

Then that Indra among the Titans, grievously wounded by his valiant adversary, the slayer of his foes, loosed a continuous shower of arrows on Lakshmana but, ere they reached him, they were severed by the sharp spear of that warrior, the destroyer of his enemies, and Lakshmana, with a crescent-shaped arrow, cut off the head of Indrajita's charioteer in his excellent car, while he was coursing here and there.

Deprived of their driver, the horses, without deviating from their course, continued to draw the chariot, advancing and describing circles in a marvellous manner. Thereupon Saumitri, of fixed courage, unable to control his anger, let fly his shafts against the titan's steeds causing them to take fright.

Provoked by this action, the son of Ravana struck the terrible Saumitri with his ten arrows and those shafts, equal to lightning, that seemed composed of all the poisons, glanced off his golden armour.

Seeing that his coat of mail was impenetrable, the son of Ravana, Indrajita, in a transport of rage, manifesting his lightness of hand, struck Lakshmana in the forehead with three arrows of graceful joints, and that illustrious warrior, the joy of the House of Raghu, with three shafts embedded in his forehead, shone in the forefront of battle like unto a triple mountain. Albeit thus smitten by the titan's arrows, Lakshmana, in his turn, instantly let fly five shafts which struck Indrajita, who was adorned with lovely earrings, full in the face.

Thereafter Lakshmana and Indrajita, warriors of exceeding prowess, armed with powerful and mighty bows, overwhelmed each other with sharp arrows. With their limbs streaming with blood, those two heroes, Lakshmana and Indrajita, at that instant shone on the field of battle like two Kimshuka Trees in flower and each hurling himself on the other desirous of victory, pierced his opponent's limbs with formidable arrows. Filled with martial ardour, the son of Ravana smote Bibishana's handsome countenance with three darts and, having pierced that Indra of the Titans with three iron-tipped shafts, he struck all the monkey leaders one after the other.

Highly provoked, the exceedingly energetic Bibishana felled the horses of the wicked Ravani with a mace, whereupon the mighty Indrajita, springing down from his car, his horses slain and his charioteer dead, hurled a javelin on his paternal uncle.

Beholding this, the enhancer of Sumitra's delight, with his sharp arrow, severed it in ten pieces in its flight and it fell on the earth. Thereafter Bibishana, his mighty bow in his hand, let fly five Marganas, the impact of which being equal to lightning, and struck Indrajita, whose horses had been slain, in the breast. Having passed through his body, those golden-hafted arrows,

that flew straight to their target, were stained with blood so that they resembled huge red serpents.

Then, highly incensed against his paternal uncle, Indrajita, standing in the midst of the titans, selected a marvellous arrow of great power that he had received from Yama and, seeing him place that formidable shaft on his bow, the valiant and intrepid Lakshmana took up one of immeasurable power which had been bestowed on him during sleep by the God Kuvera, and that weapon was irresistible, nor could the Gods nor the Asuras with their leaders stand before it.

And those excellent bows, resembling maces, when stretched by their arms, emitted a piercing sound like unto two ospreys and the two powerful arrows notched on those wonderful bent bows lit up the faces of the two heroes with a vivid glow. Those barbed shafts loosed from the bows illumined the heavens, striking against each other with a violent impact and the shock of those formidable weapons as they struck against each other caused them to burst into flame, emitting sparks and smoke. Like unto two great planets colliding together, they fell shattered in a hundred pieces on the battlefield.

Seeing those weapons severed and broken in the forefront of the battle, Lakshmana and Indrajita were seized with mortification and fury and, in his anger, Saumitri armed himself with Varuna's shaft whilst Mahendra's conqueror, fighting on foot, let fly Rudra's weapon in the fight which shattered Varuna's dart, despite its immense potency. Thereafter, in his ire, the illustrious Indrajita, victorious in combat, as if about to destroy the worlds, took up the flaming Agneya Weapon but the valiant Lakshmana diverted it with the Solar Dart and, seeing his shaft thus baffled, Ravani, maddened with anger, seized hold of the Asura Weapon that was sharp and fatal to its foe. Then from his bow sped shining Kutamudgaras, spears, Bushundis, maces, swords and axes and, beholding that dire and dreadful weapon, irresistible to all beings, the destroyer of every missile, the illustrious Lakshmana arrested it with the aid of the Maheshwara Weapon.

Thereupon a prodigious struggle arose between the rivals, causing the hair to stand on end and, from all sides, Beings, standing in the sky made a circle round Lakshmana and the

heavens were filled with a host of Beings overcome with astonishment at the fearful tumult arising from that dread conflict between monkeys and titans. Rishis, Pitris, Gandharvas, Garudas and Uragas with Shatakratu at their head watched over Lakshmana during the fight and, in that instant, the younger brother of Raghava took up the foremost of shafts, the Avya Weapon of flaming impact, in order to transfix Ravana's son, and also the well-plumed and gilded dart, skilfully fashioned, to which the Celestial Host paid homage and with which Shakra, that mighty Lord of great energy, who is drawn by bay horses, formerly overcame the Danavas in the war between Gods and Asuras. That weapon of Indra's, undefeated in combat, foremost of shafts was placed by Saumitri on the most excellent of bows and the fortunate Lakshmana, in order to achieve his purpose, spoke to the presiding Deity of that weapon, thus :—

" If Rama, the son of Dasaratha, is truly virtuous and loyal and, in feats of heroism has no rival, then slay the son of Ravana ! "

Thus speaking, that warrior, the slayer of his foes, stretched his bow up to his ear and let fly an arrow united to Indra's weapon on Ravani in the fight, that was incapable of missing its target, and it severed the lovely head of Indrajita, graced with earrings and its casque, causing it to roll on the earth. Separated from the body, Indrajita's huge head, streaming with blood, resembled a golden ball thrown on the ground ; and the son of Ravana fell dead on the battlefield with his armour, his helmet and his broken bow.

Then all the monkeys with Bibishana, beholding the corpse, shouted in exultation, as the Gods rejoiced at the death of Vritra, and in the skies, the Bhutas, magnanimous Rishis, Gandharvas and Apsaras, on beholding the leaders of the great titan army scattering on all sides, harassed by the victorious monkeys, emitted shouts of triumph.

Hard pressed by the monkeys, the titans, flinging down their arms, hastily fled in disorder towards Lanka and, in the general stampede the titans, throwing away their weapons, lances, swords and axes, ran in all directions at once. Terror-stricken, harried by the monkeys, some re-entered Lanka, others threw themselves into the sea or took refuge on the mountain. Now that Indrajita lay dead on the battlefield, the titans fled away in

their thousands. As the sun withdraws behind the Asta Mountain and its rays disappear, so did the titans vanish from the horizon when Indrajita had fallen. As the solar orb with its rays extinguished or a fire without heat, so did that long-armed warrior lie bereft of life and the world, freed from her sufferings and delivered from her enemy, rejoiced! And the blessed Shakra was exceedingly gratified at the death of that titan of evil deeds and the great Rishis also, whilst in the heavens, the Gods could be heard striking their gongs and the dancing Apsaras and the magnanimous Gandharvas caused a rain of flowers to fall that was marvellous to behold.

On the death of that titan of cruel exploits, peace reigned, the waters became limpid, the air pure and Devas and Danavas rejoiced at the fall of one who was a source of terror to all the worlds. Thereafter a shout of triumph arose from the Devas, Gandharvas and Danavas who said :—

"Now let the Brahmins go about their pursuits without anxiety, their sins removed!"

Then the monkey leaders, beholding that Bull among the Nairritas slain in battle, whose prowess was irresistible, paid homage to Lakshmana and Bibishana, Hanuman and Jambavan; and all the Plavamgamas, growling and leaping with chattering of jaws, surrounded that descendant of Raghu, lashing their tails and clapping their hands. 'Victory to Prince Lakshmana!' rose the cry and, embracing each other, the monkeys, their hearts filled with joy, hymned the praises of Lakshmana in every way.

Witnessing that difficult feat of Lakshmana's, he who was the delight of his friends and seeing the corpse of Indra's adversary, the Gods, highly gratified, experienced supreme delight.

CHAPTER 92

Rama commends Lakshmana who is cured of his Wounds by the Monkey Sushena

Lakshmana, graced with auspicious marks, his limbs bathed in blood, having slain that conqueror of his foes on the battlefield, experienced supreme satisfaction.

Taking with him Jambavan, Hanuman and all the inhabitants of the woods, the valiant and illustrious Lakshmana speedily returned to Sugriva and Raghava, leaning on Bibishana and Hanuman. Thereafter, having circumambulated Rama and paid obeisance to him, Saumitri stood beside his brother as Upendra by Indra.

Then that hero, Bibishana, approaching with a look which itself was eloquent of delight, described Indrajita's fearful end and it was with joy that Rama learned how the head of Ravani had been severed by the great-souled Lakshmana and the tidings that Indrajita had fallen under Lakshmana's blows filled that valiant prince with unequalled felicity so that he cried out :—

" Well done, O Lakshmana, this exceedingly difficult feat pleases me ! Ravani's death means victory, be assured thereof ! "

Thereafter, smelling the head of Lakshmana, who had increased his glory yet who was abashed, the mighty Rama caused him to be seated on his lap and, with gentle strength, having clasped his brother, who was wounded, to his breast, he gazed upon him tenderly again and again. Then Rama, smelling his head once more, passed his hand rapidly over his body and, in order to sooth him, said :—

" Thou hast accomplished an auspicious and highly momentous feat, O Thou whose exploits are beyond the power of others ! Now that his son is slain, I deem Ravana to be defeated. To-day the death of that perverse wretch confers victory over Ravana, the Scourge of Men, upon me, be thou blessed, O Warrior ! Thou hast severed the right arm of the King of the Titans on which he leant for support ! Bibishana and Hanuman too, bore themselves with valour in the great fight. In three days, that warrior was utterly vanquished ; from now I am delivered from my foes, for Ravana will assuredly come forth, setting out with considerable forces. When, on hearing of the death of his son, which will overwhelm him with grief, the King of the Titans advances surrounded by his vast army, I shall encircle him with my powerful forces and slay him, difficult though it be. The conqueror of Indra having fallen in combat with thee, under thy direction, O Lakshmana, neither Sita nor the earth itself would be hard to regain ! "

Having lavished comfort and caresses on his brother, the son of Raghu, Rama, joyfully addressed Sushena, saying :—

" Do thou pluck out the arrows from the highly intelligent Saumitri, who is ever devoted to his friends, and restore him. Speedily heal the wounds of Saumitri, who is attached to his friends, and do thou nurse back to health all those who received blows and wounds in the conflict, those bears and monkeys whose valiant battalions have trees as their weapons."

At these words of Rama, the powerful monkey leader, Sushena, administered a sovereign remedy to Lakshmana's nostrils and having inhaled it, that hero was at once liberated from his darts and wounds. Restored to his normal state and freed from the arrows, his burning pains at an end, his fever suddenly allayed, Saumitri experienced supreme delight. Thereupon Rama, the King of the Plavagas, Bibishana and the valiant Chief of the Bears with their forces, seeing Saumitri standing free from pain, rejoiced exceedingly.

Then that supremely difficult exploit of Lakshmana's was praised by Dasarathi of great soul, and, recollecting that the conqueror of Indra had fallen in the fight, the King of the Monkeys was filled with joy.

CHAPTER 93

Ravana's Grief on hearing of his Son's Death

POULASTYA's ambassadors, having learnt of Indrajita's death and confirmed it, conveyed the tidings to Dashagriva in all haste, saying :—

" O Great King, Thine illustrious son has been slain by Lakshmana, who was accompanied by Bibishana ; we were witness thereof ! That hero, confronted by a hero, measured his strength with Lakshmana's ! Thy son, undefeated in any combat, he who triumphed over the Gods with Indra at their head, has gone to the Celestial Regions, having been overwhelmed by Lakshmana's shafts ! "

Hearing of the terrible, cruel and grievous end of his son on

the battlefield, that bull among the titans swooned away and only came to himself after a long time.

Distracted with grief on account of his son's death, that unfortunate one, beside himself, burst into lamentation, crying:—

"O Thou, the Conqueror of Indra, how hast thou suffered thyself to be overcome by Lakshmana this day? In thy wrath, wast thou not able to strike down Kala and Antaka themselves with thy shafts, as also the peak of the Mandara Mountain? How much more was it possible for thee to strike down Lakshmana in the fight? Hereafter the King of Death will be held in greater reverence by me, since to-day he has brought thee under the sway of destiny, O Long-armed Warrior! Even among the Celestial Host, this is the path trodden by those skilful warriors who wage a brave fight! He who is slain in the service of his lord goes to the heavenly regions. Seeing Indrajita slain this day, the Gods and all the Guardians of the World, free from anxiety will sleep in peace! Now the Three Worlds and the entire earth with its woods appears deserted to me without the only Indrajita. To-day I shall hear the cries of the youthful daughters of the Nairritas in the private apartments, like unto the roar of elephants in a mountain cave. O Hero, where hast thou gone, relinquishing thy right to the throne, to Lanka, the titans, thy mother, myself and thy consorts? Assuredly, I should have preceded thee to the abode of death so that I might have received those honours due to the departed, offered up by thee, but the contrary has taken place, O Hero! Why do Sugriva, Lakshmana and Raghava still live and why hast thou deserted me ere thou hadst rid me of this triple thorn?"

Having first lamented thus, Ravana, the King of the Titans was overcome with a violent rage on account of the death of Indrajita and the grief at losing his son increased the fire of anger within him who was irascible by nature, as in the summer months the rays of the sun become more intense. From his half-opened mouth, he seemed to breathe forth flame and smoke in his rage, as Vritra formerly from his, and his eyes, naturally red, were further inflamed with ire, glowing in dreadful wise. Under the sway of anger, his aspect, ever a source of terror, caused him to resemble the enraged Rudra! Tears fell from the eyes of that infuriated monster like boiling oil from two flaming lamps.

Grinding his teeth, he made a sound like unto the revolving of the rod[1] with which the Gods and Danavas churned the milky ocean. Mad with anger, like unto Antaka eager to devour all beings animate or inanimate, he allowed his gaze to wander over the four quarters of the horizon nor did any titan dare approach him, and in a transport of rage the King of the Titans, seated amidst his warriors, in order to excite their ardour, said :—

" Having practised penance for thousands of years and gratified Swyambhu on countless occasions, as the fruit of mine austerities, he accorded me complete immunity from Devas and Asuras.

" Brahma bestowed a coat of mail, that gleamed like the sun, on me which, in my conflicts with the Gods and Asuras, none of my foes, though armed with thunderbolts, were able to shatter. To-day, clad in that armour and mounted on my chariot of war, who will dare to withstand me, be it Purandara himself?

" The great bow with its arrows bestowed on me when I gratified Swyambhu, after an encounter with Devas and Asuras, that redoubtable bow will be drawn by me to the sound of countless musical instruments, in a mighty battle, to Rama and Lakshmana's destruction ! "

Tormented by the death of his son, the ferocious Ravana, overpowered by anger, having reflected within himself, resolved to slay Sita. Rolling his reddened eyes, that cruel and terrible titan, in his anguish, said in the presence of all the Rangers of the Night, in plaintive tones :—

" My unfortunate son, in order to deceive the monkeys, having had recourse to magic, showed them an illusory corpse, saying :—' This is Sita ! ' Verily it shall become a reality ! I shall slay Vaidehi who is devoted to that evil wretch ! "

Having spoken thus, he seized hold of a sword that was well-tempered and bright as the stainless sky and rushed out in haste surrounded by his wives and counsellors. Ravana, whose heart was torn with grief on account of his son, taking up his sword, rushed out to find Maithili and seeing the king setting out in a great rage, the titans emitted leonine roars and embracing each other, said :—

[1] This refers to the Mountain Mandara which was used by the Gods and Asuras as the churning rod.

"To-day we shall see those two brothers humbled! In his anger, Ravana has overcome the four Guardians of the World and countless others have fallen under his blows; the Three Worlds have yielded up their treasure to him whose prowess and valour have no equal on earth!"

As they were speaking thus, Ravana, in a transport of rage, was rushing to where Sita was to be found in the Ashoka Grove, and, though his friends sought to restrain him, he ran on, as in the sky the planet Rahu bears down on Rohini.

The irreproachable Maithili, in the midst of the female titans who guarded her, beholding that furious titan with a great sword, was seized with terror, and the daughter of Janaka, Sita, seeing him continue to advance with that weapon upraised, though his friends sought to restrain him, in the height of misery, wailing, uttered these words:—

"Beholding that wicked wretch rushing upon me in fury, I, who am defenceless but who yet have a defender, fear that he intends to slay me! Despite my loyalty to my lord, he entreated me again and again, saying 'Be my consort' and I constantly repulsed him. My refusal has assuredly caused him to give way to despair and, in a transport of fury, he is preparing to slay me. Or it may be that those two tigers among men, those brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, have, on my account, been cut down to-day on the battlefield. I hear a great clashing of gongs and the exultant shouts of innumerable people rejoicing! Woe is me, the two princes have died for me or else this titan of cruel intent has come to slay me on account of grief over his son or he has been unable to slay Rama and Lakshmana! Why did I not follow Hanuman's counsel, miserable creature that I am! If I had departed, seated on his back, I should now be resting happily in the lap of my lord. Assuredly Kaushalya's heart will break when she learns that her son has perished in the fight and, weeping, she will recollect the birth, childhood, youth, virtuous deeds and beauty of that magnanimous hero. Overcome with despair, having offered up the obsequies in honour of her dead son, distracted with grief, she will ascend the funeral pyre or cast herself into the river. Cursed be that wicked hunch-back Manthara and her sinister counsels; it is she who is the cause of the sufferings which will overwhelm Kaushalya."

Hearing the unfortunate Maithili lamenting thus, she, who resembled Rohini fallen under the sway of Rahu in the absence of the Moon, a virtuous and honest counsellor, the sagacious Suparshwa, seeking with his companions to restrain Ravana, the King of the Titans, said to him :—

"Why, O Dashagriva, dost thou, the younger brother of Vaishravana himself, seek to put Vaidehi to death in an access of rage, disregarding the law?[1] Thou who art a student of the Veda, who hast been purified by pious observances and who delightest in the scriptures, how art thou able to harbour the thought of slaying a woman? O Valiant Monarch of the Titans, spare the beautiful Maithili and loose the vials of thy wrath on that man, entering into combat with him with our aid. This is the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight[2] and to-morrow, on the day of the new moon, march to victory surrounded by thy forces. Courageous, armed with thy sword, in thine excellent chariot, a mighty car-warrior, thou shalt cut down the terrible Dasarathi and take possession of Mithila's daughter!"

Thereupon the wicked and powerful Ravana, giving ear to the judicious words of his devoted counsellor, returned to the palace and re-entered the assembly hall surrounded by his friends.

CHAPTER 94

Rama's Exploits

HAVING entered the council chamber, the unhappy king, the mighty Ravana, overwhelmed by the death of his son, seated on his throne, in the depth of affliction, breathing like an enraged lion, saluted the leaders of his army and addressed them saying:—

"Do ye set out at the head of cavalry with a column of chariots, elephants and horses, with which you are abundantly supplied, and, in the fight, hurl yourselves upon Rama only, overwhelming him with a rain of missiles, like clouds in the rainy

[1] The Law of Dharma or Righteousness.
[2] Dark Fortnight—The fortnight of the waning moon.

season. Thereafter when your sharp darts have pierced his limbs in that great battle, to-morrow, I myself will put an end to Rama's life in the presence of all beings."

On this command from their king, the titans set out in their swift-moving chariots followed by innumerable battalions. Armed with maces, harpoons, swords, arrows and life-destroying axes, all those titans struck the monkeys, who countered them with blows from rocks and trees. Then, as the sun rose, a great and terrible struggle ensued between titans and monkeys, fearful to behold and they struck each other with countless shining weapons, javelins, swords and axes in the fray and a prodigious dust storm, arising on account of the battle, was laid again by the rivers of blood from titans and monkeys. With elephants and chariots as the banks, javelins as the fish, standards as the trees, corpses as the floating logs, rivers of blood flowed.

Though soaked in gore, the valiant monkeys, leaping hither and thither in the fight, hacked the banners, armour, chariots, horses and weapons of every kind to pieces. With their sharp teeth and nails the Plavamgamas tore the hair, ears, foreheads and noses of their opponents. A hundred of the foremost of the monkeys leapt on every titan like birds on a felled tree and the titans, like unto hills, struck the redoubtable monkeys with heavy maces, javelins, scimitars and axes. Cut to pieces by their foes, the great army of monkeys sought shelter with Rama, the son of Dasaratha, the only true refuge.

Then that exceedingly energetic hero, taking up his bow, penetrating into the ranks of the titans, overwhelmed them with a hail of darts, and when he entered their lines, like unto the sun entering the clouds, those formidable warriors, whom he was consuming with the fire of his shafts, were unable to discern him. And the titans, beholding the terrible exploits of that hero so disastrous to them, recognized their author to be Rama, and as the passing of a hurricane through a forest becomes patent, so, when innumerable battalions were overthrown and great cars overturned, they perceived it to be his work. And they beheld their army decimated by arrows, battered and crushed by his shafts but, so rapid were his movements, that they could not see Rama and they were no more able to discern Raghava than beings distinguish the soul that governs the senses.

"There is the one who is exterminating our cohorts of elephants!" "There is he, who with his sharp arrows is destroying cavalry and infantry!"

Speaking thus, the titans, taking each other to be Rama in the fight, under this delusion, slew each other in anger, and they were not able to see the real Rama, who, nevertheless, was destroying their army, for they had all been thrown into bewilderment by the exceedingly mighty, marvellous and powerful Gandharva Weapon! And sometimes on that vast battlefield, thousands of Ramas appeared to the titans and sometimes they could only see one; and the bow of that hero seemed to them to be a myriad golden bows, whirling like a circling torch, while Raghava himself remained invisible!

With his body the pivot, his strength the lustre, his arrows the spokes, his bow the felly, the twanging of the cord and the gauntlet the sound, the force of his intelligence its radiance, its splendour the impetus of his weapon, its circumference the circle traced by Rama, while he was massacring the titans, he resembled the Wheel of Time in the eyes of all beings. And in the eighth part of a day, Rama with his flaming arrows, single-handed, exterminated the army of the titans who were able to change their form at will, which comprised eighteen thousand great elephants, fourteen thousand cavalry and two hundred thousand infantry.

Exhausted, their horses slain, their chariots shattered, their standards broken, those rangers of the night, who had escaped the carnage, took refuge in the City of Lanka.

With the corpses of elephants, infantry and horses, the battlefield resembled the ground where the mighty Rudra, enraged, disports himself.

Then Devas, Gandharvas, Siddhas and Paramarishis cried out:—

"Well done! Well done!" lauding Rama's achievement.

And the magnanimous Raghava said to Sugriva who stood near with Jambavan and the foremost of monkeys, Mainda and Dvivida:—

"The power to wield this terrible weapon belongs to me and Tryambaka[1] alone!"

[1] Tryambaka—A name of Shiva meaning 'Three-eyed'.

Having destroyed the army of the King of the Titans, Rama, the equal of the magnanimous Shakra, who amidst darts and arrows transcended all fatigue, received the delighted homage of the Celestial Host.

CHAPTER 95

The Lamentations of the Titan Women

ALL those thousands of elephants and horses and those mounted upon them with the myriad chariots bright as fire and their flaming banners, as also the innumerable titans who were full of valour, able to change their form at will, armed with maces and axes and wonderful golden pennants, fell under the fiery darts, decorated with fine gold, of Rama of imperishable exploits.

Beholding this and hearing those tidings, the rangers of the night, who had escaped the carnage, were filled with terror and those wretched titans were united in a common misfortune.

The female titans and those who had lost their sons and kinsfolk, overwhelmed with affliction, assembled to wail and lament, crying :—

" How did Shurpanakha, who was old, hideous and of sunken belly, dare to approach Rama in the forest, he who was the equal of Kandarpa himself? Seeing that handsome youth, full of nobility, ever engaged in the welfare of all beings, that monstrous Rakshasi, who should have been slain by others, was overpowered by lust. How could she, who was devoid of all good qualities, dare to make love to the all-powerful Rama who is possessed of comely features and endowed with every virtue? To the detriment of her own race, despite her grey hair and wrinkles, through a ridiculous infatuation condemned by all, that hideous creature pursued Raghava with her importunities to the destruction of the Titans, Dushana and Khara.

" It was on her account that Ravana committed this offence, the fatal bearing away of Sita, the daughter of Janaka, and has provoked the emnity of the implacable and powerful Raghava.

" When the Demon Viradha sought to possess Vaidehi, he fell before her under Rama's blows; this example should have

proved sufficient! And fourteen thousand titans of terrible deeds were cut down in Janasthana by Rama's shafts resembling flaming torches, whilst, in the fight, Khara was also slain with Dushana and Trishiras by his darts that glittered like the sun; this too should have been sufficient to prove his prowess!

"Kabandha too, with his arms four miles in length, who lived on blood, was slain despite his fury and screams; this too was a manifestation of Rama's might. He slew the powerful son of that God of a Thousand Eyes, the mighty Bali who was as dark as a cloud, this too proved his valour! And Sugriva, who dwelt disconsolate on Rishyamukha, the vehicle of his hopes shattered, was restored to the throne by Rama, which was a further proof of his power.

"All the titans counselled Ravana to his advantage, and Bibishana, in accord with his duty, offered him good advice in reasonable words but, in his folly, that monarch disregarded them. If the younger brother of Dhanada had given ear to Bibishana, Lanka, which has now become a cemetery, would not have been laid waste.

"When he learnt that the mighty Kumbhakarna had been slain by Raghava and that the invincible Atikaya had fallen under Lakshmana's blows, as also Indrajita, his beloved son, still Ravana remained blind to the truth!

"'My son, my brother, my lord has perished in the fight' is the cry heard from the female titans in every family. Chariots, horses and elephants have been struck down in their thousands by the mighty Rama and are lying here and there with the foot soldiers whom he has also slain. He who is destroying us is Rudra or Vishnu or Mahendra or the God of a Hundred Sacrifices, in the form of Rama, unless he be the God of Death himself! We live bereft of hope; our warriors slain by Rama; we see no end to our fears and we lament the loss of our defenders.

"On account of the great boons he has received, Dashagriva seems unaware of the appalling peril that faces him at the hands of Rama. Neither Devas, Gandharvas, Pisachas or Rakshasas will be able to rescue him when he falls into Rama's power. Each time Ravana has entered the lists against Rama, inauspicious omens have appeared foretelling his destruction!

"When the Grandsire of the World was gratified with him,

he received immunity from Devas, Danavas and Rakshasas but he did not ask to be protected from man. Here without doubt is one of those who will prove fatal to the titans and Ravana.

" Oppressed by that titan, who was filled with arrogance on account of the boon he had obtained through his severe penances, the Vibudhas took refuge with Brahma and, in order to be of service to them, the magnanimous Grandsire of the World uttered these memorable words :—

" ' From to-day the Danavas and Rakshasas shall not cease to wander through the Three Worlds harried by constant fear ! '

" Meantime the Gods with Indra at their head approached the Destroyer of Tripura, the God whose vehicle is the bull, who received them favourably and, being gratified, Mahadeva said to them :—

" ' For your salvation, a woman will be born who will bring about the destruction of the titans ! This woman, whom the Gods will employ, as formerly hunger was used to wipe out the Danavas, will be the destroyer of the titans and Ravana .' By bearing Sita away in his perversity and misconduct, Ravana has dug a fearful abyss in which all will be engulfed! Who is there in the world who can rescue us ? We have fallen into Raghava's hands, who is the equal of Time, the Destroyer of the Worlds !

"As elephants (that are) trapped in a blazing forest, there is no refuge for us in this extreme peril ! The magnanimous Bibishana chose the fitting moment to take refuge with him from whom he foresaw the danger was to come."

Thus did the consorts of those rangers of the night lament with piercing cries, in despair, plunged in grief and terror, their arms interlaced.

CHAPTER 96

Ravana goes out to fight and encounters ill Omens

FROM every dwelling in Lanka the piercing cries emitted by the female titans and their heart-rending lamentations reached Ravana's ears and, sighing for a long time, that fierce-eyed monarch reflected awhile and thereafter fell into a great rage.

Biting his lips, his eyes red with anger so that the titans themselves were not able to endure his aspect, he resembled the Fire of Dissolution itself. In a voice choking with fury, he issued the following orders to the titans who stood near, consuming them with his glance, as it were, and said :—

" Do you summon Mahodara, Mahaparshwa and Virupaksha speedily and let troops go forth into battle at my command."

At these words, in accord with the king's command, the titans, in fear, called the warriors together and those titans of formidable aspect unanimously cried :—" Let it be so ! " and having performed many benedictory rites and paid obeisance to Ravana, those mighty car-warriors all bowed down with joined palms to their master, whose victory they desired, and set out towards the battlefield.

Then Ravana, agitated with fury, with a sneering laugh, said :—

" To-day with my shafts, loosed from the bow resembling the sun at the end of the world-cycle, I shall send Raghava and Lakshmana to the abode of Yama ! By the death of our foes, I shall avenge Khara, Kumbhakarna, Prahasta and Indrajita this day !

" Neither space nor the cardinal points nor heaven nor the seas themselves will be visible under the cloud of shafts with which I shall cover them. To-day with my bow I shall cut the foremost of the monkey battalions to pieces with a succession of my plumed darts. To-day from the height of my chariot, swift as the wind, I shall submerge the simian army under the rolling waves of mine arrows with the aid of my bow in the guise of the ocean. This day I shall be the elephant who tramples under his feet those divisions resembling lakes, with open lotuses the faces, the glistening stamens the bodies ! This day, with each arrow loosed in the battle, I shall pierce the monkey forces in their hundreds, as they fight furiously with trees. By slaying mine adversary to-day, I shall dry the tears of all those who have lost their brothers or whose sons have perished. To-day, pierced by my shafts, so large a number of monkeys will lie scattered here and there that, through my prowess one will not be able to discern the earth's surface ! To-day the crows, vultures and beasts of prey will be sated by the flesh of the foe struck down by my darts.

"Let my chariot be yoked with all speed and let my bow be brought immediately; let those rangers of the night, who are still here, follow me into battle!"

At this command, Mahaparshwa gave his orders to the army leaders, who were present, saying :—

"Hasten to assemble the troops!" On this, the leaders summoned the titans, going from house to house, making the entire circuit of Lanka at a rapid pace. Instantly all the titans of grim aspect ran out with a formidable clamour, carrying every kind of weapon in their hands. Swords, lances, clubs, maces, hammers, Halas, spears with sharp points, huge Kutamudgaras, harpoons of every kind, discus, pointed Parashvas, Bhindipalas, Shataghnis and various other arms. Thereafter four officers under his command, brought a hundred thousand chariots to Ravana and three hundred thousand elephants, sixty kotis of horses, mules and buffalo and innumerable foot soldiers, all hastening there at the king's command.

Whilst the leaders rallied the forces who were to be found in the city, the sovereign's driver prepared his chariot; and it was superbly furnished with celestial weapons and embellished with every kind of ornament, filled with various arms, adorned with rows of bells, encrusted with pearls, blazing with its jewelled pillars and covered with thousands of golden pinnacles.

Beholding it, all the titans were seized with exceeding admiration and, perceiving it, Ravana, the Lord of the Titans ascended thereon and mounted that car glittering like a myriad suns, blazing like fire itself, and effulgent with its own lustre. Then Ravana drove away immediately surrounded by innumerable titans, bearing down the earth as it were with the weight of his forces; and, amongst the titans on all sides, there was a great din of shouting and shrilling of pipes accompanied by tabors, war drums and conches.

"There goes the King of the Titans with his fan and canopy, the abductor of Sita, the ruthless slayer of brahmins, that thorn in the side of the Gods, who is setting forth to fight the Prince of the House of Raghu!" Such were the cries heard on all sides and, at the uproar, the earth trembled whilst the monkeys fled in terror.

Meanwhile, the long-armed Ravana, surrounded by his

ministers, marched on, full of the ardour of combat and certain of victory. At his command Mahaparshwa, Mahodara and the indomitable Virupaksha ascended their chariots and these warriors, in their delight, emitted war cries loud enough to shatter the earth and, with formidable shouts, they set out eager for victory.

The highly effulgent monarch, surrounded by his valiant battalions, rushed into battle, brandishing his bow, like Yama at the dissolution of the world, and that great warrior, mounted on his car harnessed to swift steeds set out through the gate where Rama and Lakshmana were encamped. At that moment the sun lost its brilliance, the quarters were enveloped in darkness, the birds emitted dreadful cries, the earth trembled, the Gods let fall a rain of blood and Ravana's horses stumbled, whilst a vulture alighted on the pole of his banner and sinister jackals howled. Then that titan felt his left eye twitch and tremors pass through his left arm; he grew pale and his voice seemed to die away. As Dashagriva set forth to fight, ill omens appeared presaging his death; a meteor fell from the sky with the crash of thunder and herons and vultures emitted mournful cries. Ravana, however, remained unmoved by the terrible portents that appeared and rushed madly to his doom, urged on by destiny.

At the sound of the titan chariots, the rakshasa host and the monkey army also prepared to give battle and from every side, impatient for victory, challenged one another.

Meanwhile, in his ire, Dashagriva with his golden shafts, created havoc among the monkeys and some among those heroic warriors had their heads severed by him and the hearts of others were pierced or their ears cut off and some fell lifeless, the flanks of others being torn, their heads broken or their eyes put out. Whenever the ten-headed titan, rolling his eyes furiously, turned his chariot in the fight, the ferocity of his assault was irresistible to the leaders of his foes.

CHAPTER 97

The Fight between Virupaksha and Sugriva. Virupaksha's Death

THE mutilated corpses of the monkeys, who had fallen under the shafts of Dashagriva were heaped on the earth, and the Plavamgamas were as unable to endure that irresistible avalanche of darts loosed by Ravana, as butterflies a scorching fire. Tormented by those sharp arrows, they fled screaming like elephants enveloped in flames and Ravana advanced in the fight scattering them with his darts as the wind disperses the clouds.

Having, in his fury, exterminated those inhabitants of the woods, that Indra among the Titans rushed on to find Raghava. Then Sugriva, seeing the monkeys cut to pieces and routed, gave over his position to Sushena and addressed himself for battle. Relinquishing his command to that monkey, who was his equal in valour, Sugriva went out to meet the enemy, a tree in his hand. At his side and following in his footsteps marched all the monkey leaders brandishing enormous rocks and every kind of tree.

Thereafter that royal giant let forth a great shout and fell on that mob of titans, destroying their leaders, and that mighty monarch crushed the titan divisions, as at the end of the world cycle the wind breaks down the great trees; and he let fall a shower of stones on the titan divisions like a huge cloud letting loose hailstones amidst a flock of birds in a wood. Under the avalanche of stones loosed by the King of the Monkeys, the titans, their heads shorn of their ears, fell like crumbling mountains, and whilst the titans were being overthrown by Sugriva, who was crushing them as they fell, they cried out. Then Virupaksha, armed with his bow, proclaiming his name, leapt down from his chariot and that indomitable titan mounted an elephant and, advancing thereon, and he, full of vigour, let forth a terrible cry and hurled himself on the monkeys. Thereafter he rained a shower of formidable darts on Sugriva in the forefront of battle and arrested the rout of the titans by reviving their courage.

Riddled with wounds from the sharp arrows of the titans, that Indra of Monkeys, howling with rage, resolved to slay him and,

brandishing a tree, that valiant and indomitable monkey leapt forward and struck the huge head of his adversary's elephant, and under the virulence of that blow, the great tusker sank down emitting loud cries.

Then the courageous titan jumped down from the back of the stunned beast and, turning on the monkey, threw himself upon him, but he, clad in mail covered with the hide of a bull, unsheathing his sword, with a rapid step, rushed defiantly on Sugriva who stood fast, waiting. Then Sugriva met the impact of Virupaksha and thereafter let fly a great rock like unto a cloud, whereupon that lion among the titans, seeing the stone falling, jumped aside and, full of valour, struck the monkey with his sword. Pierced by the valiant titan's sword, the monkey lay on the ground for a time deprived of consciousness, then, suddenly rising to his feet in the great struggle, he whirled his fist round and round, bringing it down violently on the titan's chest.

Wounded by his blows, the night-ranger, enraged, with his sword severed Sugriva's armour in the forefront of battle and, under the shock, he fell to his knees. Thereupon the monkey, picking himself up, gave the titan a terrific blow that resounded like thunder, but Virupaksha evaded it skilfully and, with his fist, struck Sugriva on the chest.

Thereafter the monkey king waxed even more furious and, seeing that the titan had parried his thrust, sought an opportunity to attack him. In his rage, he struck him a violent blow on the temple like unto Indra's thunderbolt which felled him to the earth, and the blood flowed from his mouth covering him like water from a mountain torrent. Rolling his eyes in fury, foaming at the mouth and bathed in blood, he seemed more misshapen[1] than ever and the monkeys beheld their enemy covered with blood, trembling, and rolling from side to side, emitting plaintive cries.

Meanwhile the two valiant armies of monkeys and titans, who were fighting one another, began to create a terrible uproar like two seas that had burst their banks.

In the presence of the all-powerful titan, who had been slain by the King of the Monkeys, the varied multitude of monkeys and titans resembled the Ganges in flood.

[1] A play on the word Virupaksha, which means ' Distorted '.

CHAPTER 98

Mahodara is slain by Sugriva

In that fearful struggle, both armies gradually melted away under each others' blows like two lakes drying up under the summer heat. The destruction of his forces and the death of Virupaksha redoubled the fury of the Lord of the Titans. Seeing his army decimated and destroyed by the monkeys, he recognized that destiny was opposing him and he became apprehensive.

Thereafter he addressed Mahodara, who stood near him, saying :—" From now on, O Long-armed Warrior, thou art my only hope of victory ! Go, triumph over the enemy forces ! Display thy heroism to-day ; the time has come to return the favours thy master has bestowed on thee ! Fight bravely ! "

At these words, that foremost of titans, Mahodara replied :— " Be it so ! " and rushed on the enemy's army as a butterfly into a flame. Then that exceedingly powerful titan, whose ardour had been stimulated by the words of his master and also on account of his own native valour, began to create carnage among the monkeys.

From their side, the noble-hearted monkeys, arming themselves with enormous stones, penetrated into the ranks of the redoubtable titans and slew them all. And Mahodara, at the height of fury, with his golden shafts severed the hands, feet and thighs of the monkeys in the great struggle and they, after a hard fight with the titans, fled to different quarters, some taking refuge with Sugriva.

Witnessing the rout of his powerful army, Sugriva rushed upon Mahodara and the Lord of the Monkeys, seizing a huge and formidable rock resembling a hill, threw it at him with great force, in order to crush him.

Seeing the stone falling, Mahodara, unmoved, cut it to pieces with his arrows. Under the titan's darts, it fell in a thousand fragments on the earth so that it resembled a flock of frightened vultures. Beholding that rock broken, Sugriva, mad with anger, tore up a Sala Tree and flung it at his adversary, who broke it into

many pieces. With his shafts, that hero, the scourge of his foes, broke the tree, whereupon Sugriva, observing an iron stake lying on the ground, brandished the flash ng bar before the eyes of the titan and, with one exceedingly violent blow, struck down his excellent steeds.

Leaping down from his great car, its team of horses having been slain, the valiant Mahodara, highly provoked, took hold of a mace and the two warriors, one armed with an iron bar and the other with a mace, approached each other, bellowing like bulls, resembling two clouds charged with lightning. In fury, the night-ranger, his lustrous mace glittering like the sun, rushed on Sugriva and, as the terrible club was falling upon him, the extremely valiant leader of the monkeys, his eyes red with anger, lifted up his weapon and struck, whereupon the bar instantly fell shattered to the earth. Then Sugriva, boiling with rage, from the ground picked up a huge club gilded on all sides and, brandishing it, hurled it against the mace, striking it, whereupon, on the impact, the two missiles broke in pieces and fell on the field.

Their weapons shattered, the two warriors attacked each other with blows of their fists and, full of ardour and strength, resembled two lit braziers. Amidst loud cries, they struck each other and, having interchanged blows, rolled on the earth. Leaping up immediately, the two pugilists, great champions, scourgers of their foes, exhausted each other, whereupon each seized hold of a sword that lay within reach and, transported with rage, threw themselves upon each other, their weapons upraised. Then those two spirited and experienced warriors moved rapidly from left to right of one another, each seeking to slay his opponent. Meantime the courageous, impetuous and wicked Mahodara, proud of his strength, pierced Sugriva's heavy mail with his sword whereupon the weapon snapped on the impact. Then that elephant among monkeys, with his own sword, severed the titan's head bearing a helmet and adorned with earrings.

Beholding their leader lying headless on the ground, the whole army of titans melted away and, having slain Mahodara, the monkey with his forces began to cheer, whereupon Dashagriva grew furious and Raghava was filled with joy.

With downcast mien, the titans, overwhelmed, all fled away mad with terror, but the son of Surya,[1] having laid Mahodara low, who resembled part of a great mountain, shone with effulgence like that orb itself with its inextinguishable brilliance. And the hosts of the Gods, Siddhas, Yakshas and also the beings who move on the surface of the earth, gazed with great delight on the King of the Monkeys, who had achieved that supreme victory.

CHAPTER 99

The Combat between Angada and Mahaparshwa

MAHODARA having been struck down by Sugriva, the all-powerful Mahaparshwa gazed on his slayer, his eyes red with anger and, with his shafts, began to sow disorder in Angada's formidable ranks; and as the wind detaches a fruit from its stalk so did that titan sever the upper limbs of the leading monkeys. With his darts, he cut off the arms of some and, full of ire, pierced the sides of others. Overwhelmed by those shafts, that Mahaparshwa loosed upon them, the monkeys grew pale with fright and lost courage.

Then Angada, wishing to give a little respite to his troops, who had been trampled upon and decimated by that titan, leapt up full of fury like the ocean on the day of the full tide. Seizing an iron bar that shone like the rays of the sun, that Prince of the Monkeys struck Mahaparshwa in the struggle and he, losing consciousness, fell from his chariot, its driver having been slain, and lay senseless on the earth.

Thereupon the mighty King of the Bears who resembled a heap of black antimony and was extremely powerful, arming himself with a huge rock like unto the peak of a mountain, strode ahead of his battalion, which resembled a cloud, and with a furious blow struck down the horses and shattered the chariot of the titan.

Mahaparshwa, however, regaining consciousness, leapt up in an instant and, in his great vigour, riddled Angada with

[1] Sugriva.

innumerable arrows again and again and struck Jambavan, the King of the Bears with three spears full in the chest, wounding Gavaksha with innumerable shafts. Thereafter Angada, who was transported with rage, seized hold of an enormous stake and with that iron bar, bright as the rays of the sun, the son of Bali, his eyes red with anger, taking hold of it with both hands and brandishing it with force, with the intention of slaying him, hurled it on Mahaparshwa, who stood some distance off.

Thrown with force, the bar knocked the bow with its arrows from the hand of the titan and struck off his helmet, whereupon Angada, with a single bound, seething with rage, struck the titan a blow with his clenched fist on the ear, which was adorned with an earring.

Enraged, the valiant and illustrious Mahaparshwa seized hold of a great axe in one hand and with that stainless weapon washed in oil, made of solid stone, that titan, in a paroxysm of fury, struck his antagonist violently, but the blow, falling on the left shoulder, glanced off his armour. Then Angada, the equal of his sire in valour, furious, lifted up his fist which was as powerful as lightning and knowing the vital parts of the body, delivered a blow like unto Indra's thunderbolt on the chest of the titan, close to his heart.

On this the titan, his heart riven by the shock, fell dead on that vast battlefield, and seeing him lying stretched on the earth without life, his army took fright, whilst Ravana fell into a transport of rage.

Thereafter the monkeys with Angada, let forth a joyous roaring that resounded far and wide, shattering the gates and turrets of Lanka as it were. The Gods too with their king let forth a great shout and that enemy of Indra, the Lord of the Titans, enraged on hearing the immense uproar among the inhabitants of the Celestial Regions and the forests, resolved to enter into the lists once more.

CHAPTER 100

Rama and Ravana fight with magic Weapons

BEHOLDING Mahodara and Mahaparshwa slain and, despite his great strength, the valiant Virupaksha also struck down, a great rage seized Ravana, who urged on his charioteer with these words:—

" By slaying Rama and Lakshmana I shall remove that double scourge, the cause of the slaughter of my faithful adherents and the siege of the city. In the fight I shall cut down Rama, that tree of which Sita is the flower and the fruit, whose branches are Sugriva, Jambavan, Kumuda, Nala, also Dvivida, Mainda, Angada, Gandhamadana, Hanuman, Sushena and all the leading monkeys."

Thereupon that mighty car-warrior, who caused the ten regions to resound, drove rapidly on Raghava with his chariot, and the earth, with its rivers, mountains and woods, trembled with the uproar, and the lions, gazelles and birds that inhabited it were seized with terror.

Then Ravana employed a dark and magic weapon that was formidable and terrifying and with it he consumed the monkeys, who fled hither and thither. Amidst the dust raised by their battalions, for they were unable to endure that weapon created by Brahma himself, Raghava, seeing those countless divisions taking refuge in innumerable places, pursued by Ravana's powerful shafts, stood ready waiting.

Meanwhile that Tiger among the Titans, having routed the army of monkeys, beheld Rama standing there unconquered with his brother Lakshmana, like unto Vasava with Vishnu, and Rama seemed to touch the sky as it were as he stretched his great bow and those heroes with eyes as large as lotus petals were long-armed and the conquerors of their foes.

From his side the extremely illustrious and valiant Rama, who was accompanied by Saumitri, seeing Ravana overwhelming the monkeys in the fight, joyfully took hold of the centre of his bow and immediately began to bend that excellent weapon that was stout and sonorous, riving the earth as it were.

At the sound of Ravana's loosing a myriad arrows and Rama stretching his bow, the titans fell to the ground in their hundreds! Thereafter Ravana, coming within a bow's length of the two princes, resembled Rahu in the presence of the sun and moon. Desiring to be the first to enter into combat, Lakshmana with his sharp arrows, having placed them on his bow, loosed his shafts resembling flames of fire. Hardly had that archer let fly his darts into the air than the extremely energetic Ravana stayed them in their course, severing one with one, three with three and ten with ten, thus demonstrating his lightness of hand. Leaping over Saumitri, that triumphant warrior, Ravana approached Rama in the conflict, who stood ready like unto an unscalable mountain. Bearing down on Raghava, his eyes red with anger, the Lord of the Titans loosed a rain of shafts upon him but, with the aid of his sharp arrows, Raghava severed those innumerable darts that flamed in formidable wise and resembled venomous snakes.

Thereafter Raghava struck Ravana with redoubled blows and Ravana struck Raghava and they riddled each other with a hail of varied and penetrating missiles and, for a long time, described marvellous circles round each other from left to right, overwhelming each other with swift arrows, each remaining undefeated. And all beings were seized with terror witnessing that desperate duel between those two redoubtable bowmen, the equals of Yama and Antaka. The sky was covered with clouds riven by lightning flashes and the firmament became, as it were, pierced with holes by a rain of whirling arrows of extreme velocity, possessing sharp points, adorned with heron's plumes. With their darts, they first obscured the sky as when the sun withdraws behind the Astachala Mountains and two great clouds suddenly appear.

Thereafter, between those two warriors, each seeking to slay the other, an incomparable and unimaginable struggle ensued like unto the duel between Vritra and Vasava. Both were furnished with excellent bows, both were skilled warriors, both brought exceptional knowledge in the science of arms to the fight. In all their manoeuvrings they were followed by a stream of shafts as the waves in two oceans that are whipped up by a tempest.

Then, with a skilful hand, Ravana, the Destroyer of the Worlds, aiming at Rama's forehead, loosed a formidable succession of iron shafts from his bow, which Rama received unmoved on his head like a garland of lotus leaves. Thereupon, reciting a sacred formula, arming himself with Rudra's weapon and choosing a large number of spears, full of wrath, the illustrious Raghava bent his bow and with force let fly those weapons in rapid succession against that Indra of Titans but those darts fell without breaking through the armour of Ravana, who, like an immense cloud, remained unmoved.

Then Rama, skilled in the use of arms, struck Ravana afresh on the forehead, as he stood in his chariot, with arrows to which he had joined a miraculous weapon, and it appeared as if five-headed serpents in the form of darts were penetrating hissing into the earth repelled by Ravana whom they sought to devour. Thereupon, having rendered Raghava's weapon void, Ravana, in a transport of rage, armed himself in his turn with the dreadful Asura weapon which he loosed joined to sharp and terrible arrows with huge points, having the heads of lions, tigers, herons, geese, vultures, falcons, jackals and wolves or resembling serpents with five heads. Others had the heads of donkeys, boars, dogs, cocks, aquatic monsters and venomous reptiles and those sharp arrows were the creation of his magic power. Struck by the Asuric shafts, that lion among the Raghus, he who resembled the God of Fire himself, responded with the Agneya Dart that was full of power and to it he joined arrows of every kind with points that burnt like fire and which resembled suns, planets and stars in hue or great meteors like unto flaming tongues. Those formidable missiles belonging to Ravana striking against those loosed by Rama, disintegrated in space and were annihilated in their thousands.

Thereupon all the valiant monkeys with Sugriva at their head, able to change their form at will, beholding the titan's weapon destroyed by Rama of imperishable karma, let forth joyous acclamations and made a circle round him.

Then the magnanimous son of Dasaratha, the descendant of Raghu, having destroyed that weapon discharged by Ravana's own arm, was filled with felicity, whilst the leaders of the monkeys joyfully paid homage to him.

CHAPTER 101

Ravana flees from Rama

HIS weapon having been destroyed, Ravana, the King of the Titans, whose fury was redoubled, in his wrath instantly produced another; and he loosed the fearful Rudra Weapon, forged by Maya, on Raghava. Thereafter, from his bow, innumerable spears, maces, flaming bars hard as diamond, mallets, hammers, chains and spiked clubs, like unto fiery thunderbolts, issued forth like the tempests at the dissolution of the worlds.

Then the glorious Raghava, most skilled in the knowledge of excellent shafts, that warrior of great renown, broke that weapon with the aid of the marvellous Gandharva Dart, and when it was shattered by the magnanimous Raghava, Ravana, his eyes red with fury, loosed his Solar Weapon whereupon huge and brilliant discs issued from the bow of the skilful Dashagriva of redoubtable courage, which, falling, lit up the sky on every side and the four quarters were consumed by the fall of those flaming missiles that resembled the sun, moon and stars.

With a mass of arrows Raghava destroyed those discs and darts loosed by Ravana in the fore-front of the battle and, seeing his weapon broken, Ravana, the Lord of the Titans with ten arrows struck Rama in his vital parts. Struck by ten shafts that Ravana had discharged from his great bow, the exceedingly energetic Raghava did not flinch and, in his turn, that victorious prince, in the height of anger, pierced Ravana in all his limbs with the aid of innumerable darts.

At that instant, the younger brother of Raghava, the valiant Lakshmana, slayer of hostile warriors, armed himself with seven arrows and, with those exceedingly swift shafts, that illustrious prince severed Ravana's standard in many places, which bore the image of a man's head. With a single arrow, the fortunate Lakshmana of immense vigour, cut off the head adorned with brilliant earrings of the titan who drove the chariot, and with

five sharp arrows severed the bow resembling the trunk of an elephant that belonged to the King of the Titans.

Thereafter Bibishana, bounding forward, with his mace slew Ravana's beautiful horses that were as tall as hills and resembled a dark cloud in hue, whereupon Dashagriva, leaping quickly from his car, the steeds of which having been slain, was filled with exceeding wrath against his brother and that powerful and spirited monarch loosed a flaming spear on Bibishana like unto a thunderbolt, but ere it reached its target, Lakshmana severed it with three arrows, whereupon a great cheer arose amongst the monkeys in that formidable struggle, and that spear, wreathed in gold, fell down shattered in three fragments like unto a great meteor falling from the sky amidst a shower of flaming sparks.

Then the titan, that mighty Ravana of wicked soul, armed himself with another superior and tested spear which Death himself would have found hard to resist and which was of immense size and shone with its own effulgence. Brandished with violence by the mighty Ravana of perverse soul it gave out a lurid gleam so that it appeared like forked lightning.

Meanwhile the valiant Lakshmana, perceiving that Bibishana stood in peril of his life, placed himself quickly in front of him and that hero, stretching his bow, with a rain of darts riddled Ravana, who stood waiting to discharge the weapon he held in his hand. Under the shower of arrows with which the courageous Saumitri overwhelmed him, thus frustrating his design, the titan no longer thought of striking him in return. Seeing that he had preserved his brother's life, Ravana, who was standing before him, addressed him thus :—

" O Thou whose strength renders thee arrogant, since thou hast preserved this titan, my spear shall fall on thee ; having pierced thine heart, this bloodstained weapon that mine arm, equal to an iron bar, will hurl at thee will rob thee of thy life's breath and return to my hand."

Thus did Ravana, speak and in a paroxysm of rage, levelling that pick adorned with eight extremely loud bells, created magically by Maya, that was infallible, the slayer of its foes, the splendour of which flamed up as it were, hurled it at Lakshmana with a mighty shout. Loosed with terrible violence

and a sound of thunder, that spear fell with force on Lakshmana in the forefront of the battle.

Then Raghava sought to mitigate the power of that weapon and said :—

" May good fortune attend Lakshmana ! May this mortal impact be rendered void ! "

Released by the enraged titan on that indomitable hero, the spear which resembled a venomous snake, falling with extreme violence, penetrated his great chest and so brilliant was it that it appeared like the tongue of the King of the Serpents. Loosed with force by Ravana, that spear penetrated deep into the body of Lakshmana who, with his heart pierced, fell on the earth.

Beholding Lakshmana in that condition, near to whom he stood, the extremely powerful Raghava, full of solicitude for his brother, felt his heart stricken, but after an instant's reflection, his eyes welling with tears, enraged as is Pavaka at the dissolution of the world, he thought—' This is not the time for lamentation ' and thereafter he entered once more into the fearful conflict, resolved to make a supreme attempt to slay Ravana.

His eyes fixed on his brother, Rama saw how he had been pierced with a spear in the great fight and was covered with blood, resembling a mountain with its reptiles. And the most vigorous of monkeys sought to draw out that weapon loosed by the mighty Ravana, overwhelmed though they were by a hail of shafts discharged by the King of the Titans ; the spear, however, having passed through Saumitri's body had penetrated into the earth. Then Rama, with his powerful hands seized hold of that spear and, in his wrath, snapped it, throwing the fragments to a great distance and, as he drew it out, Ravana penetrated his every limb with his shafts that pierced to his very marrow. Ignoring these darts, Rama embraced Lakshmana and said to Hanuman and that mighty Monkey Sugriva :—

" Ye foremost of the monkeys, gather round Lakshmana ! O King of the Monkeys, the time has come for me to manifest my prowess ! For long I have sought this occasion ! May the wicked Dashagriva of infamous exploits perish ! My longing resembles that of the Chatak bird[1] on beholding the clouds at the end of summer. Ere long, I swear to thee either Ravana or

[1] This bird is said only to quench its thirst at a certain season.

Rama will cease to exist in the world! Ye shall be witness thereof! The loss of the kingdom, my sojourn in the forest and my wanderings in the woods of Dandaka, the insult offered to Vaidehi, my encounter with the titans, the great and terrible misfortune that has visited me, this torment resembling hell will be wiped out this day when I slay Ravana on the battlefield! He on whose account I took the army of monkeys in my train, having installed Sugriva, when I had slain Bali in the open field, and on whose account I crossed the ocean, having thrown a bridge over it, that wretch to-day has come within my range of vision and shall therefore cease to live. Appearing before me, Ravana cannot survive any more than one who comes into the presence of a serpent whose glance is poisonous or a snake falling under Vainateya's gaze. Be tranquil witnesses of my combat with Ravana, O Invincible Ones, Foremost of the Monkeys; seat yourselves on the brow of the mountain. To-day in this duel, the Three Worlds with the Gandharvas, the Siddhas and Charanas will recognize Rama's attributes! I shall accomplish a feat that the world with all beings who move or do not move, as also the Gods, will recount as long as the earth exists!"

Speaking thus Rama began to discharge his penetrating shafts embellished with gold at Dashagriva. From his side, Ravana, like a cloud from which the rain falls, showered down arrows and clubs with violence on Rama. And a mighty uproar arose when, in order to slay each other, those marvellous arrows were loosed by Rama and Ravana. Severed and scattered, the shafts with flaming points discharged by Rama and Ravana fell from the sky on the earth, and the twanging of their bows, causing great terror amongst all beings, was astonishing to hear. Then that amazing hail of missiles, that the mighty hero let fly in continuous streams from his burning bow, overwhelmed Ravana who, terrified, took to flight like a great cloud driven before the tempest.

CHAPTER 102

Lakshmana's miraculous Recovery

SEEING the courageous Lakshmana lying on the battlefield drenched in blood, struck down by the spear discharged by the mighty Ravana, Rama entered into a terrible duel with that cruel titan whom he overwhelmed with a hail of arrows. Then he addressed Sushena and said :—

"The valiant Lakshmana, struck down by the ruthless Ravana, is writhing like a serpent, filling me with anguish! When I behold that hero, dearer to me than life itself, how, in mine affliction, can I find the strength to fight? If my brother, who is endowed with auspicious marks, that proud warrior, returns to the five elements, of what use is life or prosperity to me? My prowess is ebbing away as it were and my bow seems to be falling from my grasp; mine arrows are blunted, mine eyes blinded with tears, my limbs are heavy as when one is overcome by sleep, my thoughts wander and I long to die! In this extreme misfortune in which I am plunged, weeping, my mind distracted on seeing my brother, who is emitting inarticulate cries, lying in the dust of the battlefield, brought low by the wicked Ravana, a prey to suffering and seriously wounded in his vital parts, even victory cannot bring me felicity, O Hero. If the moon is hidden from sight what delight can it give? Of what use is it to fight? What purpose is served by living? The combat has no longer any meaning since Lakshmana is lying dead in the forefront of the battle. As that illustrious warrior followed me when I retired to the forest so will I follow him now to the abode of death.

"Ever affectionate to his kinsfolk, he was undeviatingly devoted to me; I was led to this pass by the titans who have made use of magic in the fight. Wives may be found everywhere and everywhere one may meet with friends but I see no place where one could find so dear a brother. Without Lakshmana of what use will it be for me to rule over a kingdom, O Invincible Warrior? What shall I say to Sumitra who loves her son so

tenderly? I shall not be able to endure the reproaches with which she will address me. What shall I say to my mother Kaushalya or even to Kaikeyi? What answer shall I give to Bharata and the exceedingly powerful Shatrughna? Having gone with him to the forest, how can I return without him? Better were it to die than suffer the censure of my family. What sin did I commit in a former life that my virtuous brother is now lying dead before mine eyes? O My Brother, O Foremost of Men, O First of Heroes, O Prince, why, forsaking me, wilt thou repair to the other regions? How comes it that thou dost not answer me who am lamenting? Rise, look about thee, why dost thou remain lying there? Witness my grief with thine own eyes! In my despair, be my comforter, O Long-armed Warrior, overwhelmed as I am with anguish, wandering distracted amidst the woods and mountains."

As Rama was speaking thus, overwhelmed with affliction, Sushena, in order to comfort him, addressed these well-considered words to him :—

"O Tiger among Men, abandon this idea that causes thee pain, this thought that pierces thine heart as a javelin in the forefront of the battle. Nay, Lakshmana, the enhancer of prosperity, has not rejoined the five elements for his features have not changed nor is he pale, rather is his countenance serene and handsome! Observe how the palms of his hands resemble the petals of a lotus and his eyes are bright. Those who appear thus have not yielded up their lives, O Lord of all Men! Do not grieve O Hero, Conqueror of thy Foes, Lakshmana lives, and the proofs are the multiple beatings of his heart united with his sighs even though his body lies stretched on the earth."

Thus spoke the extremely sagacious Sushena to Raghava and thereafter he addressed that great monkey, Hanuman, who stood near and said :—

"O Friend, go quickly, repair to the Mountain Mahodaya! Formerly thou hast heard of it from Jambavan, O Warrior! On the southern peak grow curative herbs, the plants named Vishalyakarani, Savarnyakarani, Samjivakarani and also Samdhani of great virtue. Bring them back, O Warrior, in order to revive that hero, Lakshmana."

At these words, Hanuman repaired to the Mountain of Herbs

but there he became anxious, for that illustrious monkey could not recognize those remedial plants. Then the thought came to Maruti, whose strength was immeasurable, 'I will carry back the peak of the mountain for it is on the summit that the auspicious herbs are growing, at least I infer so from what Sushena has said. If I return without having picked the Vishalyakarani, the loss of time will prove fatal and a great misfortune will follow.'

Reflecting thus, the mighty Hanuman hastened on his way and when he reached that high mountain, he shook the summit three times and having broken it off, balanced it, with its multitudinous trees in full flower of varying fragrance, in his two hands. Thereafter, like a dark cloud charged with rain, that monkey sprang into the air carrying the mountain peak and returned in great haste setting it down and, having rested awhile, he said to Sushena :—

" I am not conversant with the medicinal plants, O Bull among Monkeys, here is the whole summit which I have brought to thee ! "

At these words of the son of Pavana, Sushena, the foremost of the monkeys, having uprooted the herb, took hold of it and there was great amazement among the monkeys witnessing Hanuman's feat which even the Gods themselves could only have accomplished with difficulty.

Then the foremost of monkeys, Sushena, having crushed that herb, held it to Lakshmana's nostrils and on inhaling it that prince, the scourge of his foes, who was riddled with arrows, instantly rose from the ground released from the darts and his sufferings. Meanwhile the monkeys beholding him standing erect cried out 'Excellent ! Excellent ! and, full of joy, paid homage to him.

Then Rama, the slayer of his foes, said to Lakshmana :—

" Come, Come ! " and, embracing him, pressed him close to his heart, his eyes wet with tears. Thereafter, having embraced him, Raghava said to Saumitri :—" O Hero, what good fortune to see thee return from the dead ! Nay, assuredly neither life nor Sita nor victory had any attraction for me ; in sooth what reason had I for living since thou hadst returned to the five elements ? "

Then Lakshmana, pained, answered the magnanimous Raghava who had spoken thus and, in a voice trembling with emotion, said :—

" Bound by thy vow, O Thou who hast truth for thy prowess, it does not become thee to utter such cowardly words! Nay, those who speak with sincerity do not render a promise void and the proof they give is the fulfilment of their vow! Thou shouldst not give way to despair on mine account, O Irreproachable Hero! Mayest thou redeem thy word by Ravana's death this day. Nay, when he comes within the range of thy shafts, thine adversary must not return alive, as a great elephant may not live when he falls under the sharp tooth of a roaring lion. I desire to see that wretch perish ere the orb of the day withdraws behind the Astachala Mountain, his task accomplished. If thou seekest the death of Ravana on the battlefield, if thou wishest to fulfil thy duty and if thou dost aspire to re-capture the princess, O Illustrious Hero, do what I tell thee without delay."

CHAPTER 103

Rama and Ravana renew their Combat

HEARING Lakshmana's words, the valiant Raghava, the destroyer of hostile warriors, at the head of his forces, took up his bow and stretching it allowed a shower of his formidable shafts to fall on Ravana.

From his side, the Lord of the Titans, mounted on his chariot, rushed on Kakutstha, as Svarbhanu on Bhaskara; and Dashagriva, standing in his car, assailed Rama with darts like unto lightning, as a great cloud covers a huge mountain with its floods. Then Rama, with his arrows that were decorated with gold and resembled flaming brands, overwhelmed Dashagriva with them on the battlefield.

On this the Gods, Gandharvas and Kinneras declared :— 'This combat is unequal, Rama is on foot whilst the titan is in a chariot!' whereupon the foremost of the Gods, the blessed Shakra, having heard the words of the Immortals, called Matali to him and said :—

"With my chariot repair speedily to where the illustrious Raghava is fighting on foot! Go to the battlefield and invite him to ascend this car; do thou render this signal service to the Gods!"

On this command from his king, Matali, the celestial charioteer, bowing, made answer, saying :—

"With all speed I go to fulfil my duty as a charioteer!"

Thereupon he harnessed the bay horses to the most handsome of cars, the body of which being wrought with gold and hung with hundreds of little bells, with its emerald shafts shone like the rising sun, and it was yoked to excellent dappled steeds flecked with white, caparisoned in gold, their coats gleaming like the orb of day. A standard fluttered on a golden staff over that marvellous car belonging to Indra and, under the order of the King of the Gods, Matali ascended it and, leaving the Celestial Regions, went to meet Kakutstha. Armed with a lash, standing in the car, Matali, the charioteer of that God of a Thousand Eyes, having paid obeisance to him with joined palms, said to Rama :—

"Saharaksha,[1] O Kakutstha, O Renowned Destroyer of thy Foes, has lent thee this car so that thou mayest be victorious! Here too is Indra's great bow, his shield bright as fire, his arrows shining like the sun and his goodly spear well-burnished! Ascend the chariot, O Warrior, and with me as thy charioteer, triumph over the Titan Ravana, as did Mahendra over the Danavas!"

Thus addressed, Rama whose splendour illumines the worlds, circumambulated the car and, bowing, ascended it. Thereafter a wonderful combat of chariots ensued between the long-armed Rama and the Titan Ravana, causing the hair to stand on end.

Raghava, skilled in the use of powerful arrows, fought with the King of the Titans, matching Gandharva Weapon against Gandharva Weapon and Celestial Arrow against Celestial Arrow. Then the royal night-ranger, in a paroxysm of fury let fly a formidable missile on his rival, marvellous, dreadful, befitting a demon. Loosed from Ravana's bow, those shafts, decorated with gold, falling on Kakutstha, were transformed into serpents of subtle venom and those fearful monsters with brassy faces, vomiting searing flames from their gaping mouths, sprang on

[1] The Lord of a Thousand Eyes, Indra.

Rama, and those reptiles whose contact was equal to Vasuki of iron coils and violent poison, enveloped all regions on every side filling the whole of space.

Seeing those serpents falling on him in the fight, Rama chose the dreadful and appalling Garuda Weapon and discharged it. Leaving Raghava's bow, those golden-hafted arrows, brilliant as flames, transformed themselves into golden eagles, slayers of serpents, and all the darts in the form of snakes were destroyed by arrows in the shape of birds, that belonged to Rama, who was able to change his form at will.

Enraged at the destruction of his weapon, Ravana, the Lord of the Titans, caused a shower of formidable shafts to fall on Rama and while he was riddling Rama of imperishable exploits with thousands of darts, he wounded Matali with countless others. Thereafter, having aimed at the golden standard, Ravana shattered it with a single shaft and the golden device fell from the height of the chariot to the floor. With a series of arrows he struck Indra's steeds, to the exceeding terror of the Gods, Gandharvas, Charanas and also the Danavas and, seeing Rama wounded, the Siddhas and great Rishis were troubled as also the King of the Monkeys and Bibishana.

When the moon of Rama was concealed from their sight by Rahu in the form of Ravana, Budha, in the constellation of Prajapati, rushed on Rohini, the beloved of Shashin, to the misfortune of all beings. With its mist-wreathed waves, flaming as it were, the ocean, surging up in fury, seemed to touch the orb of day ; and the sun in the grasp of the Planet Dhumaketu assumed a brassy hue dreadful to behold, its rays extinguished, revealing a headless trunk on its disc ; Angaraka too was in opposition to the brilliant star of the Koshalas, the presiding Deities of which being Indra and Agni ; and in the heavens, that planet tormented Vishaka also, and Dashagriva with his ten faces and twenty arms, equipped with his bow, looked like the Mountain Mainaka.

Meanwhile Rama, overwhelmed by that ten-necked demon, was unable to loose his arrows in the conflict and, knitting his brows, enraged, his eyes inflamed, was transported with anger and it seemed as if he would consume the titan.

On seeing the furious countenance of the virtuous Rama,

all beings were seized with terror, the earth shook, the mountains, frequented by lions and tigers, trembled, the trees swayed to and fro, the Ocean, that Lord of Rivers was agitated and flocks of crows, braying like donkeys, described circles in the sky on all sides.

Beholding Rama wrought up with extreme ire and those fearful portents, all beings were filled with fear and Ravana too felt dismayed. The Gods in their chariots, the Gandharvas, the great Serpents, the Rishis, the Danavas, Daityas and winged creatures of the air gazed down on that conflict between those two warriors, who fought with every kind of dreadful weapon, so that it appeared like the dissolution of the worlds. Suras and Asuras who had come to witness the struggle, with their eyes followed that formidable duel, uttering words of sympathy and encouragement and the assembled Asuras cried out to Dashagriva 'Victory to Thee!' and the Suras addressing Rama reiterated 'Triumph! Triumph!'

At that instant the wicked Ravana, in his fury against Rama whom he wished to slay, took hold of an immense weapon that was as hard as diamond, deafening, the destroyer of its foe, furnished with spikes like unto mountain peaks, dreadful to conceive or behold, and Ravana lifted up that lance with its smoke-wreathed flaming point, like unto the fires at the time of the final dissolution of the worlds, that was greatly to be feared, irresistible and which death itself could not endure, the terror of all beings, whom it was able to crush to fragments. At the height of anger, he raised his strong arm and, surrounded by his brave troops, brandishing his weapon, that colossus, his eyes red with fury, emitted a piercing cry in order to encourage his forces, and earth, sky and the four quarters trembled at that fearful shout of the King of the Titans. With his stout arm, taking hold of that weapon he emitted a great cry and addressed his opponent insolently in these words:—

"This spear, as strong as a diamond, O Rama, that I wield in my wrath, through my prowess will shortly rob thee and thy brother of your lives! Thou shalt share the fate of my brave soldiers whom thou didst massacre in the forefront of the battle. Stay therefore that I may strike thee down with this lance, O Raghava."

At these words, the King of the Titans hurled his weapon at Rama, and loosed by Ravana's hand, that lance wreathed in lightning, deafening with its eight bells, passed through the air with a blinding flash.

Seeing that flaming spear, formidable to behold, Rama stretched his bow and discharged an arrow with force, but as the spear fell, Raghava loosed a mass of arrows to intercept it, so that he appeared like Vasava with his floods seeking to stay the encroachment of the fires at the end of the world period. As butterflies are consumed by flames, so were those shafts consumed by Ravana's huge spear ; then Raghava, seeing his aerial shafts reduced to ashes, pulverized by contact with that lance, was transported with anger and furious in the extreme. Thereafter Rama, Joy of the House of Raghu, took up his spear favoured by Vasava, that Matali had brought to him ; wielding it with his powerful arm, that lance, the destroyer of the worlds, with its sonorous bells lit up the sky like unto a brilliant meteor. In its flight, colliding with the spear belonging to that Indra of the Titans, it was shattered by the impact and that enormous lance fell bereft of its splendour. Thereafter Rama pierced Ravana's swiftly-moving steeds with shafts loosed with great force that were thunderous and flew straight to their target. Displaying all his strength, he wounded his rival in the breast with penetrating javelins and his brow with three arrows, whereupon Ravana, his whole body pierced with arrows and covered with blood, which flowed from wounds in all his limbs, resembled an Ashoka Tree in full flower. His body riddled with darts loosed by Rama, bathed in blood, feeling himself utterly exhausted, that Lord of the Rangers of the Night, in the midst of his army, was filled with extreme wrath.

CHAPTER 104

Rama arraigns Ravana and reproaches him for his Misdeeds

GRIEVOUSLY wounded by the wrathful Kakutstha, Ravana, that proud warrior fell into a great rage. His eyes flaming with anger, that titan raised his bow in a paroxysm of fury and in that

great combat, overwhelmed Raghava with blows. Like unto a heavy shower, Ravana deluged Rama as clouds fill a pond. Drowned in a rain of arrows loosed from the titan's bow in the fight, Kakutstha stood firm like unto a mighty mountain.

Then that hero, resolute in combat, with his shafts deflected the succession of darts which fell upon him like unto the rays of the sun. Thereafter, with a skilled hand, the ranger of the night, in fury, struck the breast of the magnanimous Raghava with thousands of darts and the elder brother of Lakshmana, covered with blood, looked like a huge Kimshuka Tree in flower in the forest. His wrath roused by the wounds he had received, the exceedingly powerful Kakutstha armed himself with shafts the lustre of which resembled the sun's at the end of the world period; and Rama and Ravana, both transported with anger, became invisible to each other on the battlefield that was darkened by their shafts.

Thereafter at the height of fury, the valiant son of Dasaratha addressed his adversary in these mocking and ironic words:—

"Having carried away my consort against her will in Janasthana, imposing on her ignorance, thou art verily no hero! Bearing away by force, Vaidehi who was wandering forlornly in the great forest far from me, thou thinkest 'I am a great hero!' Because thou hast molested other women who were without a protector, which is the act of a coward, thou deemest thyself to be a hero, O Valiant One! O Thou who hast overthrown the ramparts of duty, O Arrogant Wretch of fickle nature, in thine insolence, thou hast invited death into thine house, saying 'I am a hero!' Is it in the role of the valiant brother of Dhanada that thou, grown presumptuous on account of power, hast accomplished this memorable, great and glorious exploit? Thou shalt presently receive a fitting recompense for this infamous act. O Wretch, in thine own estimation, thinking to thyself 'I am a hero,' thou wast not ashamed to bear Sita away like a thief. Had I been there when thou didst affront Vaidehi, handling her so brutally, I should have dispatched thee to rejoin thy brother Khara by striking thee down with my shafts. By good fortune, O Insensate One, thou art now before me; to-day with my penetrating darts, I shall hurl thee into Yama's abode. To-day thy head with its dazzling earrings, severed by my weapon, shall

roll in the dust on the battlefield where the wild beasts will devour it. Vultures will swoop on thy breast when thou art lying stretched on the earth, O Ravana, and will drink the blood greedily that flows from the wounds inflicted by my sharp arrows. To-day pricked by my shafts, lying without life, birds of prey will tear out thine entrails as eagles destroy serpents!"

Speaking thus, the valiant Rama, scourge of his foes, covered that Indra among Titans, who stood near, with a hail of arrows, and his courage, strength and martial ardour in loosing his shafts was redoubled. Then all the celestial weapons belonging to Raghava, versed in the Science of the Self, presented themselves before him[1] and, in his joy, that illustrious hero felt the dexterity of his touch increase.

On these auspicious signs appearing of themselves, Rama, the Destroyer of the Titans, attacked Ravana himself with increasing violence.

Wounded by innumerable rocks thrown by the monkeys and the darts showered upon him by Raghava, Dashagriva's heart fainted within him and, in the agitation of his soul, he neither took up his arrows nor stretched his bow nor sought to oppose Rama's valour, while the arrows and missiles of every kind discharged unceasingly by his adversary had death as their target so that the hour of his doom appeared imminent.

Then his charioteer, observing the peril, drove the chariot calmly and slowly out of the fray and, aghast at the appearance of the king, who had sunk down bereft of energy, he turned that dreadful car, rumbling like a cloud, and left the battlefield in haste.

CHAPTER 105

Ravana reproaches his Charioteer

DISTRACTED with fury, his eyes red with anger, urged on by destiny, Ravana addressed his charioteer, saying :—

"Am I then bereft of valour and strength, deprived of prowess, cowardly, infirm of purpose, weak, without energy, devoid of

[1] That is the Deities presiding over them presented themselves before Rama.

magic powers and debarred from combat, that thou hast failed me and actest on thine own understanding? How comes it that without respect for me and disregarding my commands, in the presence of the foe, thou didst drive my chariot from the field! Through thine error this day, O Vile Wretch, that which I had won over a long period, glory, valour, honour and renown, are all lost to me! Before a foe famed for his prowess, who prides himself on his exploits, thou hast transformed me who delights in battle, into a coward. If it is not through heedlessness that thou hast acted thus, O Villain, my suspicions are well founded and thou hast been bribed by the enemy. Assuredly it was not an act of friendship or devotion; only a foe would conduct himself as thou hast done. If thou hast any loyalty to me, then return in the chariot instantly ere mine adversary has departed and remember the benefits thou hast received at my hands."

At these reproaches from the insensate Ravana, the sagacious charioteer made answer in words that were moderate and full of good sense, saying:—

"I am neither afraid, nor am I mad, nor do I yield to the solicitations of a foe, nor am I negligent, nor have I ceased to be loyal to thee, nor have I forgotten the benefits I have received from thy hand! It was through my desire to be of service to thee and to safeguard thy glory and on account of a sincere attachment, that I acted as I thought best! O Great King, thou shouldst not unjustly regard me as a vile and cowardly wretch, I who seek only to do that which is agreeable to thee. Hear me, I will tell thee the reason why I took thy chariot, resembling a flowing current driven back by the tide, from the field.

"Observing thy fatigue following on the tremendous struggle, I no longer recognized thy proud assurance nor thy superior strength. By drawing the chariot unceasingly, my steeds were overcome with fatigue, they were prostrate and overcome with the heat, like unto kine lashed by the rain; furthermore amidst the portents that were manifest in great numbers, not one, it seemed to me, was favourable to us.

"One should at the proper time and place observe the characteristics, gestures, facial expression, depression or exhilaration and the measure of fatigue of one's master, O Mighty Hero; also the place where the earth is firm and where it is

uneven or level, where it is flat or hilly and the time for combat; when the enemy lays himself open to attack, how to advance and retire, to halt or go forward, to meet the enemy or retreat to a distance, all this must be known by a charioteer, as he stands in his chariot.

"It was on account of thy prostration and the exhaustion of thy steeds and in order to mitigate this terrible fatigue, that I undertook those specific measures. It was not from caprice, O Warrior, that I drove the chariot away; it was devotion to my lord that made me resolve to act in this wise. Issue any command thou desirest, O Hero, O Scourge of Thy Foes, and I shall fulfil it implicitly with all my heart!"

Then Ravana, fully satisfied with the reply of his charioteer, addressed many words of praise to him and, in his martial ardour, said:—

"Speedily drive my chariot towards Raghava, O Charioteer, Ravana is incapable of turning back ere he has destroyed his enemies in battle!"

Speaking thus, the King of the Titans standing in his chariot, bestowed a brilliant ring of great price on his charioteer and, under his orders, the driver set out to the battlefield. Urged on by Ravana's command, the charioteer whipped his steeds into a gallop and, in an instant, the great chariot belonging to that Indra among the Titans stood before Rama in the field.

CHAPTER 106

The Sage Agastya instructs Rama in the Hymn to the Sun[1]

MEANWHILE, seeing Rama exhausted by the fight, standing absorbed in thought on the battlefield, and Ravana, facing him, preparing to begin the encounter anew, the blessed Agastya who had joined the Gods, and also come there to witness the great combat, approached that hero and said:—

"Rama, Rama, O Long-armed Warrior, hearken to the eternal secret which will enable thee to overcome all thine

[1] Hymn to the Sun, 'Aditya-hridaya', the designation of a Vedic Hymn.

adversaries. It is none other than the 'Hymn to the Sun,' O Dear Child, it is sacred, capable of subduing the foe and brings victory; this prayer is eternal, imperishable, exalted and auspicious, the delight of the good, the destroyer of all ills, the allayer of fear and anxiety, the increaser of life and the most excellent of all verses:—

"'O Thou, who on rising art crowned with rays, to whom the Devas and Asuras pay homage, salutations to Thee! Thou art Vivisvata, the resplendent Lord of the Worlds, the Soul of the Gods, the Effulgent One, Creator of Light, who sustainest the Hosts of Devas and Asuras and the Three Worlds with Thy rays. Thou art the Creator, Maintainer and Destroyer, Thou art the God of War, the Lord of Creatures, the King of the Celestials, the Distributor of Wealth. Thou art Time and Death, the One possessed of splendour, the Lord of the Waters, the Ancestors, the Vasus, the Sadhyas, the Maruts, Manu, Vayu and the God of Fire. Thou art the Source of Life and of the seasons, Thou art the Great Nourisher of all, the Generator of all, the Courser in the heavens, the Maintainer, the One possessed of rays, the Golden, the Brilliant, the Cosmic Energy, the Maker of Day. Thou art all-pervading, myriad-rayed, the Indicator of all paths, from whom proceed the senses, Thou art the Thousand-beamed One, the Subduer of Darkness, the One from Whom all happiness proceeds, the Remover of the sufferings of Thy votaries, the Infuser of life in the Mundane Egg, the One possessed of rays. Thou art the Cause of the Creation, Preservation and Destruction of the Universe, the Beneficent One, the Possessor of Wealth, the Bringer of Day, the Teacher, the Fire-wombed,[1] the Son of Aditi, Thou art supreme Felicity, the Remover of Nescience, the Lord of the Firmament, the Dispeller of Darkness, the One versed in the Rik, Yajus and Sama (Vedas), the One from Whom floweth the showers, the Friend of Waters, the One Who, with a single bound, crossed the Vindhya Range. Thou art intent on creating the Cosmos; Thou art adorned with gems; Thou art the Bringer of Death, the Pingala,[2] the Destroyer of all, the Omniscent One, Whose form is the Universe, of great energy, beloved of all, Lord of all

[1] Fire-wombed—Who has the Fire of Doom in his womb.
[2] Pingala—The motive power of the Pingala vein.

actions. O Thou, the Lord of stars, planets and constellations, the Creator of all, the Resplendent among the splendid, the Essence of the twelve forms,[1] salutations to Thee ! Salutations to the Eastern and Western Mountains, salutations to the Lord of the stellar bodies and the Lord of Day ! Salutations to Thee, the bringer of victory and the joy that springeth from victory, O Lord of the Golden Steeds ! Salutations to Thee, O Thousand-rayed One, O Aditya ! Salutations to Thee Who controlleth the senses, to Thee O Hero Who art worthy of the Holy Syllable,[2] salutations to Thee Who awakeneth the Lotus ! Salutations to Thee, O Fierce One, Who art the Lord of Brahma, Ishana and Achyuta ! To Thee, O Sun, Possessor of Light, Thou of illumining power, the Devourer of all, Who assumest the form of Rudra, be our salutations ! Salutations to Thee, the Destroyer of darkness, of cold and of the foe ; salutations to Thee of Infinite Soul, the Destroyer of the ungrateful, the Lord of the Stars ; salutations to Thee, Whose lustre resembles refined gold, the Destroyer of ignorance, the Architect of the universe. Salutations to Thee, the Remover of darkness, the Illuminer, the Beholder of all the worlds. It is Thou Who createst all and destroyeth all, Who dryeth up, consumest and annihilatest all. Thou wakest when all creatures sleep, in whose heart Thou abidest ; Thou art both the Sacrificial Fire and the fruit of sacrifice. Thou art the sum of all action and the Lord thereof.'

" O Raghava, he who recites this hymn in the time of peril, in the midst of the wilderness or in any danger does not succumb to it. Do thou offer a deep devotion to that God of Gods, the Lord of the World ! He who recites this hymn three times will be victorious ! O Long-armed Warrior, the hour has come when thou wilt triumph over Ravana ! "

Having spoken thus, Agastya returned whence he had come. These words dispelled the grief of the illustrious Raghava who felt himself fortified, full of ardour and well pleased. Thereafter meditating on Aditya he recited the hymn and experienced supreme felicity. Having rinsed his mouth three times and purified himself, that hero took up his bow. Seeing Ravana, he

[1] Twelve Forms—The twelve months.
[2] The Holy Syllable—The Pranava 'Aum'.

rejoiced and advanced towards him in order to enter into combat, calling up his whole strength with the intention of slaying him.

At that instant the Deity of the Sun, amidst the Host of the Gods, knowing that the destruction of the Lord of the Rangers of the Night was at hand, casting glances of joy and supreme satisfaction on Rama, approached him and said :—" Put forth thine whole strength ! "

CHAPTER 107

Sinister Portents appear

THEREAFTER Ravana's charioteer drove his car forward speedily, with joy, eating up space as it were, and that chariot, capable of crushing hostile armies, bore an immense standard and resembled the City of the Gandharvas. Harnessed to excellent steeds, garlanded with gold, it was filled with implements of war and adorned with flags and banners. The scourge of enemy forces and the joy of its own, Ravana's car was driven with exceeding velocity by its charioteer.

Then that prince of men, Rama, observed the chariot of the King of the Titans, rolling noisily along with its great standard, harnessed to dreadful black horses and resembling a Vimana[1] in space, bright as the sun, dazzling to behold, like unto Indra's bow, and the rain of arrows falling therefrom resembled the waters loosed by a cloud. Seeing the chariot of his adversary, which bore down upon him like a cloud, with a sound resembling a mountain shattered by lightning, Rama instantly stretching his bow, like unto the crescent moon, said to Matali, the charioteer of that God of a Thousand Eyes :—

" O Matali, behold the furious pace of the chariot of mine adversary as he rushes upon me in violent rage ! Be vigilant and drive to meet the car of my foe, I wish to destroy him as the wind scatters a rising cloud ! Without swerving or confusion, thy glance alert, thy mind steady, holding the reins with a firm hand, drive swiftly ! Assuredly thou hast no need of my counsel,

[1] Vimana—A celestial chariot, seat or abode.

accustomed as thou art to drive Purandara's chariot, yet in mine ardent desire to enter into combat, I make appeal to thine experience, I do not instruct thee."

Extremely gratified by Rama's words, Matali, the most excellent charioteer of the Gods increased the speed of his car. Passing Ravana's great chariot on the right hand, he covered it with the dust of his own wheels.

Enraged, Dashagriva, his eyes inflamed with anger, riddled Rama with arrows as he stood before him. Provoked by the blows, Rama, whose strength was redoubled by his fury, armed himself with Indra's extremely powerful bow and his great arrows of exceeding swiftness that glittered like the rays of the sun. Thereupon a fierce combat ensued between the two warriors, who stood face to face like two proud lions, each desirous of destroying the other.

At that moment, Devas, Gandharvas, Siddhas and Paramarishis, hoping for Ravana's downfall, assembled to witness that duel between those chariots.

Thereafter dreadful portents appeared, causing the hair to stand on end, foreshadowing death to Ravana and victory to Raghava. And the Gods caused blood to fall on Ravana's chariot; a great whirlwind blew from left to right whilst, in the sky, a large flock of vultures flew over his head following the evolutions of his car. Though still day, Lanka, enshrouded in the light of dusk, hued like a Japa flower, seemed aglow; great meteors accompanied by lightning fell with the sound of thunder and the titans were seized with terror witnessing those portents so unfavourable to Ravana. In whatever direction the titan drove, the earth shook and the limbs of his soldiers appeared as if paralysed. The rays of the sun falling before Ravana seemed to him coppery, yellow and white, like unto mountain ores, and the vultures and jackals who pursued him, their jaws vomiting flames, began to howl on beholding his lugubrious and downcast mien distorted with anger. Contrary winds blew raising clouds of dust on the battlefield, so that the King of the Titans was unable to distinguish anything. Indra loosed his thunderbolts on all sides on his army with an unendurable sound, without a single threatening cloud appearing; all the cardinal points were enveloped in darkness and a dense cloud of dust hid the sky.

Dreadful birds[1] fought desperately among themselves, falling in hundreds before his chariot, emitting fearful cries. From his horses' flanks sparks flew continually and from their eyes tears fell, fire and water thus issuing from them simultaneously. Many other terrifying portents, foretelling Ravana's death, appeared, whilst omens propitious to Rama, foreshadowing his imminent triumph, could be seen.

Beholding those inauspicious signs, Raghava was greatly delighted and regarded Ravana as already slain. Seeing those portents relating to himself, which he knew how to interpret, Rama experienced supreme felicity and, full of confidence, manifested a matchless energy in the struggle.

CHAPTER 108

The Fluctuations of Combat

THEN the desperate duel of chariots between Rama and Ravana broke out with increased fury so that all the worlds were seized with terror.

The battalions of titans and innumerable companies of monkeys stood motionless with weapons in their hands and, beholding those two warriors, man and titan, all were amazed, their hearts beating rapidly. Ready for combat, their arms filled with every kind of missile, they stood absorbed in the spectacle, forgetting to loose their shafts at one another, and the titans had their eyes riveted on Ravana and the monkeys on Rama so that both armies took on a strange aspect.

Meanwhile, witnessing those portents, both Raghava and Ravana, steady, resolute and full of anger, fought with determined courage. 'I shall triumph' reflected Kakutstha, 'I must die' thought Ravana and both displayed their full strength with assurance in the encounter.

At that instant, Dashagriva, in his wrath, placed his arrows (on the bow) and loosed them with force in the direction of the standard on Raghava's chariot but those missiles failed to reach the flag in Purandara's car and, glancing off the support, fell

[1] Sharikas—Turdas Salica or Gracula Religiosa.

on the earth. Meanwhile Rama, enraged, stretched his bow with energy, resolving to return blow for blow and, aiming at Ravana's banner, loosed a sharp arrow resembling a great snake, irresistible, shining in its own lustre; and he let fly his weapon in the direction of Dashagriva's standard, which being severed, fell to the earth.

Beholding his flag torn down and overthrown, the extremely powerful Ravana, inflamed with ire, blazed with wrath and indignation and, under the goad of his fury, let fall a hail of flaming shafts, striking Rama's horses. These celestial steeds, however, did not flinch, remaining motionless as if brushed by lotus stalks and, seeing the horses unaffrighted, Ravana, enraged, discharged a fresh rain of arrows, maces, iron bars, discus, clubs, rocks, trees, spears and axes, and those weapons were all created by magic, and, summoning up all his powers, he loosed them in hundreds and thousands. Appalling and terrible was that unending flood of weapons re-echoing with a sinister sound but Ravana failed to strike Rama's chariot, though his shafts fell on the monkey host on all sides covering the whole of space, and thus Dashagriva, unheeding, fought on.

Seeing him deploying increasing efforts in the struggle, Kakutstha, as if smiling, took up his sharp arrows and loosed them in hundreds and thousands. Observing them fall, Ravana, with his shafts, covered the entire sky and, on account of that rain of dazzling missiles loosed by those two antagonists, it seemed as if a second heaven of weapons had been created and, amongst them, there was not one that did not attain its target, not one, that did not pierce another and not one, that was loosed in vain; and, having collided with one another, they fell to the ground.

Thus Rama and Ravana fought with an increasing supply of weapons and, in the struggle, they showered down their spears without pause to right and left, so that these formidable weapons covered the firmament; Rama striking Ravana's steeds and Ravana striking those belonging to Rama; thus, both exchanged blow for blow and both, in the height of anger, entered upon a tremendous duel causing the hair to stand on end. Then with sharpened arrows Rama and Ravana continued their combat and, contemplating his broken standard, Ravana was consumed with rage.

CHAPTER 109

The Duel continues

WITNESSING the combat between Rama and Ravana, all beings were struck with amazement and those two warriors, assuming a dreadful aspect in the struggle, highly enraged, determined on mutual slaughter and, in their excellent cars, bore down on each other. Thereupon their drivers, parading their skill as charioteers, advanced, circled and manoeuvred in various ways. In their rapid course and swift evolutions, those two marvellous chariots ranged the battlefield, whilst the two warriors discharged countless shafts on each other, like unto clouds letting loose their showers.

Having displayed their immeasurable resource in the use of weapons, those two champions halted face to face, chariot shaft to chariot shaft, their horses' heads touching, their standards intertwined. Then Rama loosed four sharp arrows, driving back Ravana's four spirited steeds and he, furious on beholding them retreat, let fly his penetrating shafts on Raghava.

That hero, however, grievously wounded by the mighty Dashagriva, manifested neither agitation nor emotion and again the Ten-necked One discharged his shafts, that resounded like thunder, aiming at the charioteer of that God who bears the Thunderbolt; and he struck Matali with his arrows with great force without being able to disturb him in any way or cause him to falter. Nevertheless Raghava, indignant at the affront offered to Matali more than if it had been directed at himself, with the aid of a succession of darts, decided to humble his adversary, and the valiant Raghava discharged twenty, thirty, sixty and thereafter hundreds and thousands of shafts on his rival's chariot.

On his side, Ravana, the Lord of the Titans, standing in his car, enraged, overwhelmed Rama with an avalanche of maces and clubs and the struggle became more desperate causing the hair to stand on end.

At the sound of the maces, clubs and axes and the loosing of plumed arrows, the seven seas were agitated and the tumult of the oceans sowed terror in the Danavas and Pannagas in their thousands, in the depths of hell. The earth shook with its mountains, forests and jungles ; the orb of day lost its brilliance and the wind ceased to blow. Devas, Gandharvas, Siddhas and Paramarishis were wrought up with anxiety as also the Kinneras and Great Serpents.

" May good fortune attend the cows and brahmins ! May all the worlds endure forever ! May Raghava emerge triumphant in his combat with Ravana, the King of the Titans ! "

Offering up these prayers, the Devas accompanied by hosts of Rishis witnessed that duel between Rama and Ravana, a spectacle that caused the hair to stand on end, and the hosts of the Gandharvas and Apsaras, watching that indescribable struggle, cried out :—" The sky resembles the sea and the sea the sky, but the fight between Rama and Ravana resembles nought but itself ! "

Thus did they speak on beholding the combat between Rama and Ravana. In his rage, the Long-armed Warrior, the increaser of the glory of the Raghus, Rama, placed an arrow, like unto a venomous reptile, on his bow and cut off one of Ravana's heads, whereupon that glorious head, adorned with sparkling earrings, rolled on the earth in the presence of the Three Worlds. Nevertheless another, equal to the former, grew immediately and Rama, with a steady hand, dexterously sundered the second head with his shafts. Hardly was it eliminated when another head appeared which was severed once more by Rama's darts like unto thunderbolts. Thereafter he struck off a hundred more, being unable to bring Ravana low, and that hero, conversant with every weapon, he the increaser of Kaushalya's delight, who had made use of innumerable missiles, reflected :—

' These were the shafts by the help of which I slew Maricha, Khara, and Dushana as also Viradha in the Krauncha Wood and Kabandha in the Dandaka Forest ; these were the shafts wherewith I transfixed the Sala Trees and the mountains and Bali and with which I agitated the ocean ! All these weapons found their target, how is it that they have so little power over Ravana ? '

Absorbed though he was in his reflections, Raghava, without

ceasing from action, let loose a shower of arrows on the breast of his adversary. On his side, Ravana, the Lord of the Titans, standing in his chariot, enraged, overwhelmed Rama with an avalanche of maces and clubs. Thus the fearful and desperate conflict, causing the hair to stand on end, continued in the air and on the ground and thereafter on the summit of the mountain.

Devas, Danavas, Yakshas, Pisachas, Uragas and Rakshasas watched the dreadful combat that lasted seven days and neither by night nor day for a single hour did Rama and Ravana cease from fighting and the son of Dasaratha and the Indra of the Titans continued to struggle thus. Then the magnanimous charioteer of the King of the Gods, beholding no sign of Raghava gaining the victory, addressed him rapidly in the following words.

CHAPTER 110

The Death of Ravana

At that moment, Matali sought to recall Raghava's thoughts, saying :—" How is it that thou dost act in regard to Ravana as if thou wert unaware of thine own powers ? In order to bring about his end, discharge Brahma's Weapon upon him, O Lord ! Foretold by the Gods, the hour of his doom is at hand ! "

Prompted by Matali, Rama took up a flaming shaft that was hissing like a viper, formerly bestowed on him by the magnanimous and powerful Sage Agastya. A gift of the Grandsire, that weapon never missed its target and it had been created of yore by Brahma for Indra and bestowed on the King of the Gods for the conquest of the Three Worlds. In its wings was the wind, in its point the fire and the sun, in its haft space, and, in size, it resembled the Mountains Meru and Mandara. With its marvellous point, haft and gilding, it was composed of the essence of all the elements and was as resplendent as the sun. Resembling the Fire of Time enveloped in smoke, it was like unto an enormous snake and was capable of riving men, elephants, horses, gateways, bars and even rocks. Dreadful to behold, covered with blood from countless victims, coated with their flesh and of the temper of lightning, it emitted a thunderous

sound. The disperser of hosts, it created universal alarm, and hissing like a great serpent, it was exceedingly formidable. In war, it was the provider of nourishment to herons, vultures, cranes and hordes of jackals; it was a form of death itself, the sower of terror, the delight of the monkeys, the scourge of the titans and its wings were composed of innumerable brightly coloured plumes, like unto Garuda's.

That marvellous and powerful shaft that was to destroy the titan was the object of terror to the worlds, the remover of the fear of the supporters of the Ikshvakus, the depriver of the glory of the foe, and it filled Rama with delight. Having charged it with the sacred formula, the valiant Rama of indescribable prowess placed that excellent weapon on his bow according to the method prescribed by the Veda and, when he made ready, all beings were seized with terror and the earth shook. Enraged, he stretched his bow with force and, deploying his whole strength, discharged that weapon, the destroyer of the vital parts, on Ravana, and that irresistible shaft like unto lightning, irrevocable as fate, loosed by the arm of one equal to the God who bears the Thunderbolt, struck Ravana's breast. Loosed with exceeding force, that missile, the supreme destroyer, pierced the breast of the wicked-hearted titan and, covered with blood, that fatal dart having extinguished his vital breaths, buried itself in the earth. Thereafter, having slain Ravana, that shaft, stained with blood which dripped therefrom, its purpose accomplished, returned submissively to the quiver.

And Dashagriva, who had been struck down suddenly, let his bow and arrow fall from his hand as he yielded up his breath. Bereft of life, that Indra of the Nairritas of redoubtable valour and great renown, fell from his chariot as Vritra when struck by Indra's thunderbolt.

Seeing him stretched on the ground, the rangers of the night who had escaped the carnage, struck with terror, their sovereign being slain, fled in all directions and, from every side, the monkeys who, in the presence of the dead Dashagriva had assumed a victorious air, hurled themselves upon them, armed with trees. Harassed by the monkey divisions, the titans, terror-stricken, took refuge in Lanka and, having lost their lord, in despair, gave way to tears.

In the ranks of the monkeys, however, there arose cries of joy and shouts of triumph proclaiming Raghava's victory and Ravana's defeat, and the skies re-echoed to the music of the drums beaten by the Gods. A rain of flowers fell from heaven on to the earth, covering Raghava's chariot with a ravishing and marvellous shower of blossom. The cry of 'Well done! Well done!' came from the firmament and the celestial voices of the magnanimous Gods were raised in Rama's praise. On the death of that source of terror to all the worlds a great joy filled the Celestial Host as also the Charanas.

The blessed Raghava, by slaying that Bull among the Titans, fulfilled the ambitions of Sugriva, Angada and Bibishana; peace reigned over all; the cardinal points were stilled; the air became pure, the earth ceased to tremble, the wind blew gently and the star of the day regained its full glory.

At that instant, Sugriva, Bibishana and Angada, the foremost of his friends, and Lakshmana also, approached that happy conqueror and joyfully offered him due homage. Rama, the delight of the House of Raghu, surrounded by his adherents on the battlefield, having slain his adversary by his extraordinary power, resembled Mahendra amidst the Celestial Host.

CHAPTER III

The Lamentations of Bibishana

SEEING his brother defeated, lying on the battlefield, Bibishana, his heart torn with violent grief, began to lament, saying :—

" O Illustrious Warrior, thou who wert renowned for thy skill, experience and outstanding courage, even among the valiant, O Thou accustomed to a luxurious couch, how is it that thou art lying stiff and motionless, thy long arms adorned with bracelets, stretched on the ground, having suffered thy diadem, the lustre of which equals the sun, to fall on the earth? O Hero that which I predicted has come to pass! Carried away by passion, in thy presumption, disregarding my counsel, this fate

has overtaken Prahasta, Indrajita, Kumbhakarna, Atiratha, Atikaya, Narantaka, and thee thyself. Alas ! The rampart of the virtuous has disappeared, the incarnation of duty has departed, the refuge of the strong and powerful is no more. The sun has fallen to earth, the moon is obscured by darkness ; fire has lost its brilliance, energy is bereft of force, since that hero, the prince of warriors, lies stretched on the earth. What remains now that he is deprived of his might and that tiger among the titans lies as if asleep in the dust ? That great tree, the Lord of the Titans, whose stability was the foliage, his valour the blossom, his asceticism the sap, his heroism the intertwining roots, has been overthrown on the battlefield by that tempest, Raghava. That elephant in mustha, Ravana, his strength the tusks, his lineage the backbone, his exuberance the trunk, his wrath the limbs, has been seized by the lion, Ikshvaku. That blazing fire, whose prowess and energy are spreading flames, his angry breathing the smoke, his martial ardour the heat, has been extinguished by that cloud, Rama. That bull among the titans with the Nairritas as his tail, hump and horns, his love of pleasure the eyes and ears, he the conquerer of his foes, equal to the wind in swiftness, that tiger of the lords of the earth is lying dead."

Hearing these words, full of good sense and virtue, uttered by Bibishana who was torn with grief, Rama addressed him saying :—

" Nay, this hero has not succumbed on account of his lack of prowess ! Endowed with burning courage in battle, having displayed the greatest energy, he fell without yielding. One should not mourn for those who, firm in their duty as warriors, for the sake of renown fall on the field of battle. It is not the time to weep for this brave warrior, the terror of the worlds and their leaders, now that he lies under the sway of death ; no one is always victorious in war ; sometimes the brave succumb to the blows of the enemy and at other times it is the foe who is overcome by them. This path followed by Ravana was taught to us by the Sages and the warrior class hold it in great honour. The warrior who is slain in battle, should not be mourned, this is the law. In this conviction, do thy duty without further anxiety and consider what action should now be taken."

Then Bibishana, who was overcome with grief, instantly replied to that noble prince who had spoken to him in his brother's interest and said :—

" This valiant one who, in previous battles was never defeated even by the assembled Gods under Vasava's command, assailed by thee on the field, beheld his power shattered as the ocean when coming in contact with its shores. The bestower of gifts on those who desired them, he knew how to enjoy wealth and entertain those who served him. The distributor of treasure amongst his friends, he suffered his wrath to fall on his foes. Feeding the sacred fire, he practiced severe penances, was conversant with the Veda and fulfilled his duty as a real hero. Now, with thine approval, I desire to perform his obsequies."

Touched by these poignant words of Bibishana's, Rama commanded him to perform the funeral rites that lead the soul to heaven, and said :—

" Death has terminated our emnity that now has no reason for its existence. He is as dear to me as thee ; let us therefore perform the obsequies ! "

CHAPTER 112

The Lamentations of Ravana's Consorts

HEARING that Ravana had fallen under the blows of the highly powerful Raghava, the female titans, like unto cows which have lost their calves, overcome with grief, their hair dishevelled, rushed out of the inner apartments and, though restrained, rolled in the dust again and again. Issuing from the northern gateway with their attendants, they entered that dreadful battlefield searching for their dead lord and cried out, ' O Our King, Our Support ', running hither and thither on the ground that was covered with headless trunks, mud and gore. Their eyes full of tears, overcome with grief, they emitted cries like unto female elephants who have lost the leader of the herd.

Then they beheld that great and exceedingly powerful and illustrious Ravana, their lord, lying in the dust and they immediately all fell upon his body like creepers that have been torn

down in the forest. In a transport of passion, one embraced him sobbing, one pressed his feet, one hung on his neck, whilst another, beating the air with her arms, rolled on the ground and yet another, gazing on her dead lord, swooned away, and one, laying her head in his lap, wept as she looked on him, her tears bathing his face, as rime covers a lotus flower.

Beholding their lord lying stretched on the earth, in their despair, they emitted continual cries of pain as their lamentations increased—' He of whom Shakra himself stood in awe, he who was the source of terror to Yama, he, by whom the King Vaishravana was dispossessed of his Chariot Pushpaka, he, who caused the Gandharvas, Rishis, and the magnanimous Gods to tremble, is now lying dead on the field. He had nought to fear from Asuras, Suras or Pannagas, for it was in man that the peril lay for him; he, who could not be slain by Devatas, Danavas or Rakshasas is lying here on the earth, struck down by a mere mortal fighting on foot; he, who could not be slain by Suras, Yakshas or Asuras, received his death blow from a man, as one who is defenceless.'

Thus did the wretched consorts of Ravana speak amidst their sobs and, overwhelmed with grief, continued to lament without ceasing, saying :—

" Not heeding the advice of thy friend, who ever offered thee prudent counsel, to our destruction thou didst bear Sita away and thus the titans have fallen and we shall perish this day on account of thy fault. Thy beloved brother, Bibishana, speaking to thee in reasonable terms was publicly affronted by thee in thy folly, driven on, as thou wert by destiny; if thou hadst returned the Princess of Mithila to Rama, this fearful and appalling disaster, that is destroying us to the very root, would never have taken place. The wishes of thy brother, of Rama and of thine innumerable friends would have been fulfilled; none of us would have been widowed nor the hopes of our enemies accomplished. But, in thy perversity, having retained Sita by force, the titans, we ourselves and thou thyself, are all victims of a triple destruction. Nevertheless, O Bull among the Titans, it is not thy passion that is the cause but destiny; all that dies is slain by destiny. This destruction of the monkeys and the titans in combat and thine own, O Long-armed Warrior, is the work of

destiny. Neither the considerations of wealth, desire, valour nor dominion can avert the course of destiny ! "

Thus the wretched consorts of the King of the Titans lamented like ospreys, overwhelmed by grief, their eyes full of tears.

CHAPTER 113

The Lamentations of Mandodari : Ravana's Funeral Rites

WHILE the consorts of Ravana were lamenting thus, the foremost amongst them steadily fixed on him a tender and sorrowful glance and, in the presence of her lord, Dashagriva, who had been slain by Rama of inconceivable exploits, the unfortunate Mandodari expressed her grief in this wise :—

" O Long-armed Warrior, younger brother of Vaishravana, did not Purandara himself fear to stand before thee in thy wrath and did not the great Rishis and the illustrious Gandharvas as also the Charanas, assailed by thee, flee to every quarter ? Now Rama, who is but a mortal, has defeated thee in combat, thou who didst surpass the Three Worlds in prowess ; thou whose strength rendered thee invincible, how is it that thou hast fallen under the blows of a mere man, a wanderer in the forest ? Thou , able to assume any form at will, living in a place inaccessible to man, how can thy defeat by Rama be explained ?

" Nay, I do not believe that thou wast thus struck down in the forefront of the battle by Rama's action, thou who wert ever wont to be victorious in all circumstances. Rather, having recourse to inconceivable magic, was it destiny in the form of Rama in person or it may be that it was Vasava who slew thee, O Mighty Hero ! But would Vasava have ventured to stand face to face with thee on the battlefield in view of thy great prowess and strength, thou the foe of the Celestials ? Assuredly it was that great Yogi, the Supreme Soul, the Eternal Spirit Who was thy slayer. He who has no beginning, middle or end, the Most High, greater that Mahat,[1] the Support of Nature, He Who carries the conch, the discus and the mace, Whose breast bears

[1] Mahat—Cosmic Intellect.

the Shrivatsa Mark, to Whom prosperity belongs, the invincible, indestructible, everlasting Vishnu, the true Hero assuming human form surrounded by all the Gods in monkey shapes, He, the Lord of the Worlds, has slain thee, thou, the enemy of the Gods, with thy kinsmen and the titans who attended on thee !

" Formerly, having subdued the senses, thou didst conquer the Three Worlds and thereafter thy senses conquered thee in their turn. Rama is no mere mortal ; once in Janasthana he slew thy brother Khara and the innumerable titans who followed him ; furthermore when Hanuman audaciously penetrated into the City of Lanka, inaccessible to the Gods themselves, we were sorely distressed. How oft did I address thee, saying, ' Have we nought to fear from Raghava ', but thou didst not heed me. These are the consequences ! Without cause thou didst cherish a passion for Sita, O King of the Titans, to the destruction of thy kingdom, life and race ! By offering insult to the illustrious Sita, who surpasses Arundhati and Rohini, thou didst commit an unpardonable offence ! She is more patient than the earth itself, the prosperity of prosperity itself, the beloved consort of Rama, of faultless limbs, who was the splendour of the lonely forest where she dwelt. By bearing that unfortunate one away, assuming a disguise and without being able to enjoy the anticipated delight of union with Maithili, thou hast brought about thine own destruction !

" O My Lord, the asceticism of that lady faithful to her husband, has consumed thee ! Since all the Gods and their leaders with Agni at their head feared thee, thou wast not instantly destroyed when thou didst lay brutal hands on that slender-waisted lady. But, O Lord, when the time is ripe, the one who acts wickedly reaps the fruit of his evil actions ; of that there is no doubt. He who behaves virtuously culls felicity and he who acts sinfully reaps ill-fortune. Bibishana has found happiness and thou in the same wise has met with disaster. Thou didst possess other women who surpassed Maithili in beauty but in thine infatuation thou didst not perceive it. None dies without a determining cause, for thee it was none other than Sita. Far didst thou go to seek that woman who was to be the reason of thy death ; now Maithili, released from all her sufferings, will rejoice with Rama. Trifling indeed is my merit, since I have

fallen into this ocean of grief, I who formerly sported on Mount Kailasha, Mandara and Meru and in the woods of Chaitaratha and all the gardens of the Gods with thee, being adorned with marvellous garlands and jewels, roaming at large in a chariot of incomparable magnificence, beholding innumerable countries, whilst now I am deprived of all pleasures and enjoyments by thy death, O Hero! Here am I, transformed as it were into another; condemned on account of the fluctuations of the fortunes of kings. O Prince, how gracious wert thou with thy charming eyebrows, brilliant complexion and arched nose; thou whose beauty, splendour and radiance rivalled the moon, the lotus and the sun; dazzling with innumerable diadems and variegated garlands, thy red lips and brilliant earrings; handsome and pleasing, whose glances, misty with wine, roved here and there in the banqueting hall, conversing with tender smiles! Alas to-day thy countenance has lost its radiance, O King, mutilated as thou art by Rama's shafts, red with blood, covered with flesh and brains and soiled with the dust of chariots. Ah! the final period of my life has come; the sad state of widowhood! Wretched being that I am, I never contemplated this! 'My father is the King of the Danavas, my consort the Lord of the Titans, my son the Conqueror of Shakra! I have nought to fear with such protectors who crush the arrogance of their foes, who are terrible and renowned for their might and courage,' thus did I speak in my pride. With such a power as thou possessed, O Bull among Titans, how has so great a disaster overtaken thee suddenly, through a mere man? Thou wert like a marvellous sapphire, enormous, like unto a mountain and dazzling with thy rings, bracelets, chains of emeralds and pearls and thy flowery garlands; full of gaiety in pastimes and enjoyments. Thy body, that shone with the lustre of thine ornaments, as a cloud riven with lightning, is now pierced by many arrows, ill-fitted to be embraced, without a space that is not bristling with darts, like unto an hedgehog, the muscles torn with shafts loosed with violence on thy vital parts, a corpse, lying on the earth, that was formerly dark in hue and is now the colour of blood, O King! Alas! That which seemed a dream has now become a reality! How was Rama able to strike thee down, thou who wert death to Death himself; whence comes it that thou hast fallen under his

sway, thou who enjoyed the wealth of the Three Worlds whom thou didst inspire with a lively fear; thou who conquered the Guardians of the Worlds, who overcame Shankara with thy shafts, who didst humble the proud and manifest thy great prowess. Thou who didst trouble the universe, the scourge of the virtuous, whose strength inspired thee to utter insolent threats in the enemy's presence; thou the support of thy family and thine attendants, the slayer of redoubtable warriors, thou who exterminated the leaders of the Danavas and Yakshas in their thousands, thou who triumphed in the fight over those wearing impenetrable armour, thou who many a time obstructed the sacrifices, thou the saviour of thy race, who set at nought the laws of duty, who took refuge in the power of magic in battle, who robbed the Gods, Asuras and men of their daughters from here and there and who didst plunge the wives of thy foes into mourning; thou, the guide of thy people, who ruled over the Island of Lanka, thou the perpetrator of dreadful deeds, thou who didst prepare for us many a pleasure and enjoyment, thou the foremost of warriors; beholding thee, O Lord, who despite thy great powers, hast been struck down by Rama, my heart must be hard indeed that I yet live bereft of thee, my Beloved. Having rested on sumptuous couches, O King of the Titans, how is it that thou art now sleeping on the earth, the dust thy coverlet?

"When mine illustrious son Indrajita was struck down by Lakshmana in the fight, I was deeply distressed but to-day I am undone, I, who, already bereft of parents and kinsfolk, now lose my last support in thee! Deprived of pleasure and enjoyments, now that thou hast left on the last journey from which none returns, O King, I shall waste away in thy perpetual remembrance. I cannot live without thee; take me with thee; why dost thou leave me in my misery? Art thou vexed to see me unveiled who have crossed the city boundary to run here on foot, O Lord? Look on thy cherished consorts who have discarded their veils; seeing them all come forth from the city, art thou displeased? This company, with whom thou didst disport thyself, is desolate, deprived of its leader and thou dost not comfort them. Hast thou no reverence for us? Those women whom thou hast widowed, O King, and more than one was of

noble lineage, who were devoted to their consorts, firm in their duty and submissive to their Gurus, in their grief have cursed thee and, on this account, thou hast fallen under the blows of thine adversary. Stricken by thee, they have cursed thee and this is the retribution! O King, the truth of the saying, The tears of women devoted to their husbands do not fall on the earth in vain ', has been proven by thee! How comes it, O King, that thou, who didst surpass all the worlds in valour, wert so base as to carry off this woman, having lured Rama from the hermitage with the aid of an illusory deer? In the intoxication of thy strength thou didst bear away Rama's consort after separating her from Lakshmana, and yet, if I reflect carefully, thou wert never a faint-hearted warrior! This is the manifest proof of the changeability of fortune. Conversant with the past and future and reflecting on the present, that long-armed warrior, my truthful brother-in-law,[1] seeing Maithili, whom thou hadst borne away, sighing deeply, told me what had taken place. The destruction of the foremost of the titans has been brought about by this infatuation which was the source of thy lust and anger. Thou didst sacrifice thy real interests to this violent appetite that destroys everything to its very roots and, by this action, the whole titan race is deprived of its leader.

" Nay, I should not weep for thee, though famed for thy strength and valour but my woman's nature inclines my heart to compassion. Bearing with thee the sum of that which thou hast done, be it good or ill, thou hast gone to the place for which thou wert destined; it is for myself I should lament, I who am plunged in affliction by thy loss.

" Thou didst not give ear to thy friends who desired thy welfare and, though exceedingly sagacious, thou didst ignore the counsels of thy brothers, O Ten-necked One. Bibishana's words so full of reason, that were measured, prudent, salutory and affectionate were not heeded by thee despite their significance. Drunk with thine own power, the utterances of Maricha, Kumbhakarna and of thy sire also, were not acceptable to thee; behold the consequences!

" O Thou who resemblest a dark cloud in hue, who art clothed in yellow, wearing dazzling bracelets, why are thy limbs stiff

[1] Bibishana.

and covered with blood? Thou feignest sleep; why dost thou not answer me who am overcome with grief? Why dost thou not speak to me, the daughter of the supremely powerful Yatudhana Sumali, who never retreated in battle? Rise! Rise! Why dost thou remain lying there in the face of this fresh insult? To-day the rays of the sun fall on Lanka without fear. Thy mace, that brilliant weapon encircled with gold, like unto Surya, with which thou didst exterminate thy foes in battle, resembling the thunderbolt of Indra, which thou didst wield at thy whim to the destruction of the many on the battlefield, now lies shattered in a thousand pieces by Rama's arrows. Why dost thou lie embracing the earth like a loved one? How is it that thou dost not address a word to me as if I were no longer thy beloved?

"Woe unto me, whose heart did not split into a thousand pieces, riven by grief, when thou didst return to the five elements!"

Thus did Mandodari lament, her eyes full of tears; and thereafter her heart overflowing with love, she swooned away, falling unconscious on Ravana's breast, like a flash of lightning striking a crimson cloud at dusk. Thereupon her companions, distressed, raised up her who was lamenting and placing her in their midst, said:—

"O Queen, art thou not conversant with the uncertainty of fate in this world and how, in a moment, the fortune of kings may change?"

To these words, Mandodari replied with sobs and cries, her pure and lovely face and her breast bathed in tears.

Then Rama said to Bibishana:—

"Proceed with the obsequies of thy brother and offer consolation to his wives!"

Thereafter the sagacious Bibishana, having reflected within himself, made this answer that was discreet, reasoned and in conformity with duty and understanding, saying:—

"I cannot perform the funeral rites for one who failed to fulfil his responsibilities and his vows, who was cruel, ruthless and disloyal; a ravisher of others wives! Under the guise of a brother he was mine enemy and took pleasure in inflicting injury; Ravana does not merit this homage! The world may say of me

'he was a barbarian', but when they learn of Ravana's wicked deeds, everyone will approve my conduct."

Thus did he speak, and Rama, full of joy, the foremost of those who are firm in their duty, answered Bibishana, who was skilled in speech, saying :—

"I seek thy welfare, since with thine aid I have been victorious, nevertheless it is essential that I should utter what is fitting, O Chief of the Titans! Though unjust and wicked, this night-ranger was ever energetic, valiant and courageous in war. It is said that the Gods with Shatakratu at their head were not able to overcome him. He was magnanimous and powerful, this oppressor of the worlds. Death brings enmity to an end; we have accomplished our purpose, let us perform the obsequies; it is meet for me, as well as for thee, to do so. In accord with tradition, this ceremony should take place in thy presence. Perform this pious act speedily, thou wilt receive much glory therefrom."

At these words of Raghava, Bibishana hastened to carry out the funeral rites.

Entering the City of Lanka, that Indra among the Titans, Bibishana, began to prepare for the Agnihotra Ceremony in honour of his brother. Carts, wood of varying essences, fire, utensils, sandal, logs of every kind, fragrant gums, perfumes, cloths, jewels, pearls and coral were all assembled by him and he soon returned surrounded by titans, whereupon, accompanied by Malyavan,[1] he initiated the sacrifice.

Having placed Ravana, the supreme Lord of the Titans, wrapped in linen cloths on a golden bier, the Twice-born with Bibishana at their head, their eyes suffused with tears, raised the litter decorated with many fragrant and divine symbols to the sound of innumerable musical instruments and funeral chants, and all, turning their faces towards the south, took up pieces of wood which had been distributed among them.

Then the brahmins, versed in the Yajur Veda, bearing flaming brands went forward and those who had taken refuge with them, and the women of the inner apartments followed sobbing with tottering steps, running hither and thither. And Ravana was placed in a spacious ground, amidst profound lamentation, and a

[1] Malyavan—The brother of Sumali.

great pyre was built with pieces of Sandal and Padmaka Wood and grass, according to tradition; and he was covered with antelope skins.

Thereafter, in honour of the King of the Titans, a rare offering was made to the ancestors and the altar was installed to the south-west with the sacred fire in its proper place. Then curd and clarified butter were poured on Ravana's shoulder and a wooden mortar placed at his feet with one between his thighs; vessels of wood and the lower and upper kindling sticks, with a spare pestle, were set there according to the prescribed rules. Now the titans sacrificed a goat in honour of their king, according to tradition, as taught by the great Rishis, and, having dipped a cloth in butter, they covered the face of their sovereign, who was adorned with garlands and sprinkled with perfumes. Thereafter Bibishana's companions, their faces bathed in tears, covered the body with cloths and every kind of roasted grain, whereupon Bibishana kindled the pyre according to the sacred rites and, having laved him with a cloth which had been previously wetted with water and mingled with linseed and sacrificial grass, he bowed down to him; then he addressed the consorts of Ravana again and again in order to console them, finally entreating them to return home. And when they had all re-entered the City of Lanka, that Indra among the Titans took up his place by Rama in an attitude of reverence.

Rama, however, with his army, Sugriva and Lakshmana, rejoiced at the death of his enemy, as the God who bears the Thunderbolt on the destruction of Vritra.

Having laid aside the arrows and bow that Mahendra had bestowed upon him as also the massive armour, Rama, the slayer of his foes, renounced his wrath, his adversary having been subdued, and once more assumed a gentle mien.

CHAPTER 114

Bibishana is installed as King of Lanka

HAVING witnessed the death of Ravana, the Devas, Gandharvas and Danavas mounted their respective chariots, discoursing on these matters. Conversing of Ravana's fearful end, the heroism of Raghava, the courageous fighting of the monkeys, the great valour of Maruti and Lakshmana and Sita's fidelity to her lord, those blessed ones returned joyfully from whence they had come.

Raghava, however, sent back the celestial chariot blazing like a flame that Indra had lent him and took leave of Matali after offering his thanks to him. Then Shakra's charioteer, dismissed by the mighty Rama, mounting his celestial car, ascended into the sky.

Matali having returned to heaven in his chariot, Raghava, the foremost of car-warriors, in the height of felicity, embraced Sugriva and, having done so, accepted Lakshmana's homage and returned to the camp amidst the acclamations of the monkey ranks.

Thereafter Kakutstha addressed the son of Sumitra, the devoted Lakshmana, the bearer of auspicious marks, who stood near him and said :—

" O Friend, install Bibishana as King of Lanka ! On account of his loyalty, his zeal and the service he formerly rendered to us, my greatest desire is to see Bibishana, the younger brother of Ravana enthroned in Lanka, O Dear One."

At these words from the magnanimous Raghava, Saumitri, full of joy, said :—" So be it ! " and speedily took up a golden jar which he placed in the hands of the foremost of monkeys. Thereafter that warrior commanded water to be drawn from the four seas and the monkeys went there in all haste and, having drawn water from the oceans, returned as swiftly as thought.

Then Saumitri, at Rama's command, lifting up an excellent jar, caused Bibishana to take his place on a high seat and, following the injunctions laid down in the sacred texts, surrounded by a crowd of his friends, with that water installed him as King of Lanka amidst the titans.

All the monkeys as well as the titans assisted at Bibishana's installation and, amidst unequalled transports of delight, they paid tribute to Rama. Bibishana's counsellors were exceedingly happy, as also the titans who were devoted to him and, being enthroned as King of Lanka, he, Raghava and Lakshmana, who accompanied him, experienced supreme satisfaction. Then the new monarch, having spoken graciously to his subjects, went to where Rama was to be found.

Thereafter the people of the city offered him curds, parched rice, sweetmeats, roasted grain and flowers, which he placed at the disposal of Rama and Lakshmana, and Raghava, seeing Bibishana's work accomplished and his purpose attained, accepted all in deference to him.

Then Rama addressed the valiant Hanuman, who resembled a mountain, as he stood before him with bowed head and joined palms, saying :—

" With the approval of the great King Bibishana, O My Friend, do thou re-enter Lanka and enquire for Maithili. Say to Vaidehi that I am well, as also Sugriva and Lakshmana. O Most Eloquent of Speakers, tell her of the death of Ravana on the field of battle. Impart these agreeable tidings to Vaidehi, O Prince of the Monkeys, and having received her commands, return ! "

CHAPTER 115

Hanuman carries Rama's Message to Sita

Thus commanded, Hanuman, born of Maruta, returned to Lanka overwhelmed with honours by the rangers of the night and, entering the city invested with Bibishana's authority which he had sought, Hanuman penetrated to the Ashoka Grove, knowing that Sita was to be found there.

There he beheld Maithili like an anguished Rohini, uncared for, sitting sorrowfully at the foot of a tree surrounded by female titans and, approaching her humbly and gently, Hanuman inclined his head in obeisance to her.

At the appearance of the mighty Hanuman, that Goddess remained silent, but thereafter, having recognized him, she was delighted, and marking her tranquil looks, Hanuman the foremost of monkeys, prepared to relate all that Rama had said :—

" O Vaidehi, Rama is well as also Sugriva and Lakshmana ; he enquires as to thy welfare ! His purpose is accomplished, he, the conquerer of his foes has slain his adversary. Assisted by Bibishana and the monkeys, Rama, with the skill and wisdom of Lakshmana, has slain Ravana despite his prowess, O Goddess ! These are pleasant tidings but I will delight thee still further, O Divinity. In this war, undertaken on thine account, O Virtuous Sita, Rama has achieved a great triumph ! Take heart therefore, have no further anxiety ; Ravana is dead and Lanka subdued. Banishing sleep, I resolved to deliver thee and bridging the sea fulfilled my vow. Do not fear now to be in Ravana's abode since Bibishana has become the Lord of Lanka. Because of this, take courage, thou canst dwell peacefully in the palace ; Rama himself is coming hither with a joyful step eager to see thee."

At these tidings, the divine Sita, her face radiant as the moon on account of joy, was unable to utter a single word and that prince of monkeys enquired of Sita, who remained silent, saying:—

" Of what art thou thinking, O Goddess, since thou dost not answer me ? "

Thus interrogated by Hanuman, Sita, fixed in the path of duty, in the height of joy, said in a voice broken with sobs :—

" Hearing these pleasant tidings of the triumph of my lord, for a moment joy rendered me speechless. Nay, assuredly, reflecting on it, O Plavamgama, I do not know what gift I can offer thee which would be equal to this ! I know nothing on earth comparable to these happy tidings or with what I can recompense thee fittingly. Gold, precious gems of every kind, even a throne or any object in the Three Worlds cannot be measured against thy message ! "

At these words of Vaidehi, the monkey, standing before her with joined palms, joyfully replied :—

" O Thou who art ever engaged in what is pleasant and advantageous to thy Lord and who desirest him to be victorious, thine affectionate speech confers honour on thee, O Irreproachable Lady."

Hearing this, Maithili, the daughter of Janaka addressed these flattering words to the Son of the Wind :—

" Thy speech which is characteristic, urbane and dictated by the eight-fold intelligence is worthy of thee. Thou, the exceedingly virtuous son of Anila art deserving of praise ! Assuredly strength, prowess, knowledge of the scriptures, courage, boldness, superior skill, energy, endurance, steadiness, constancy and humility, these brilliant qualities and many others are all to be found in thee ! "

Unmoved by this praise, Hanuman, standing before her with joined palms, addressed Sita respectfully and said :—

" With thy consent I will slay all those female titans who formerly taunted thee in thy misfortune, O Thou whose lord is a god. I know that those monsters of hideous shape and conduct, those cruel beings of savage looks, those grim-visaged titans, more than once addressed thee in threatening tones at Ravana's command. Grant me permission to strike down those barbarians of distorted features and fearful aspect. I shall beat them with my fists, heels, long arms, thighs and knees ; I shall tear them to pieces with my teeth, chew up their ears, pull out their hair, knock them down and destroy them, since they have caused thee pain, O Illustrious Princess ! I shall exterminate those monsters who formerly insulted thee."

Hearing Hanuman's words, the unfortunate Sita, friend of the distressed, reflecting carefully, said to him :—

" Who would be angry with women, who are dependent on a monarch who is their supporter, and who act on other's advice as mere servants or slaves, O Excellent Monkey ? All that has happened to me is on account of an evil fate and the consequence of some fault committed formerly. One reaps the fruit of one's actions. Do not speak thus, O Long-armed Warrior, the path of destiny is inexorable ! It was inevitable that these circumstances should overtake me and, in this conviction, I wish in compassion to protect the slaves of Ravana. It was under the orders of that titan that these women ill-treated me. He being slain, they will no longer oppress me, O Son of Maruta. There is an ancient saying full of wisdom which a bear uttered formerly in the presence of a tiger, hear it, O Plavamgama !

" 'A superior being does not render evil for evil, this is a

maxim one should observe; the ornament of virtuous persons is their conduct. One should never harm the wicked or the good or even criminals meriting death. A noble soul will ever exercise compassion even towards those who enjoy injuring others or those of cruel deeds when they are actually committing them, who is without fault?'"

Hearing these words, Hanuman, who was skilled in speech, said to Sita, the irreproachable consort of Rama:—

"Thou art worthy of Raghava, thou, his chaste wife crowned with many virtues. O Goddess, command me to seek out Rama!"

On this, Vaidehi born of Janaka, said: –

"I desire to see my lord, the friend of his devotees!"

Hearing her speak thus, Hanuman, the exceedingly intelligent son of Maruta made this reply to Maithili, causing that princess great delight

"This day shalt thou see Rama, whose countenance resembles the full moon, with Lakshmana and his trusted friends, his enemies slain, as Sachi looks upon Indra, the King of the Gods."

Having spoken thus to Sita, who was as radiant as Shri herself, the exceedingly valiant Hanuman immediately departed to rejoin Raghava. Without delay, the foremost of monkeys, Hanuman, repeated the words that the daughter of Janaka had uttered, in their proper sequence to Rama who was the equal of the Chief of the Gods.

CHAPTER 116

Rama sends for Sita

THAT highly intelligent monkey, having paid obeisance to Rama, whose eyes resembled the petals of a lotus, the most skilled of archers, said to him:—

"It behoveth thee to visit Maithili who is consumed with grief and on account of whom this enterprise, that has been crowned with success, was undertaken. In the distress that overwhelms her, Maithili, her eyes bathed in tears, hearing of

thy victory, expressed a desire to behold thee once more. Confiding in me formerly, her glances warm with emotion, she repeated ' I desire to see my lord again ! ' "

These words of Hanuman instantly evoked thoughts in Rama, the first of men, causing him to shed tears. Sighing deeply, he said to Bibishana standing near, who resembled a cloud :—

" Bring the Princess of Videha, Sita, hither, anointed with celestial unguents, adorned with heavenly jewels, having laved her head ; do not delay ! "

At these words of Rama, Bibishana hastened to the private apartments to fetch Sita with her attendants. Beholding the unfortunate Maithili, Bibishana, the powerful King of the Titans, paid obeisance to her, raising his joined palms to his forehead, and respectfully addressed her, saying :—

" O Vaidehi, sprinkle thyself with celestial unguents, adorn thyself with divine ornaments and ascend this palanquin ! May happiness attend thee ! Thy lord desires to see thee ! "

Then Vaidehi answered Bibishana who had addressed her thus, saying :—" Without having bathed, I wish to see my consort, O Bibishana."

Hearing this, Bibishana replied :—" It behoveth thee to do what Rama commands ! " Whereto the virtuous Maithili, who regarded her husband as a god, filled with conjugal duty, said :— ' Be it so ! '

Thereupon Sita, her tresses waved, adorned with priceless ornaments, wearing gorgeous raiment, ascended a palanquin borne by those titans accustomed to do so, accompanied by a large escort under Bibishana's command.

And Bibishana approaching that magnanimous hero, who was merged in meditation, bowing down to him, joyfully announced Sita's arrival.

Hearing that his consort, who had dwelt long in the titan's abode, had come, rage, joy and grief overwhelmed Raghava, the slayer of his foes and, beholding Sita in the palanquin, Rama, in order to test her, dissembling his happiness, said to Bibishana :—

" O Supreme Lord of the Titans, O My Friend who ever rejoiced in my victories, bring Vaidehi nearer to me."

At Raghava's command, the righteous Bibishana caused the crowd to disperse, whereupon titans clad in armour, wearing

turbans, with drums and bamboo staves in their hands began to move about driving away the warriors, bears, monkeys and titans, who, scattering, stood apart some way off. And as they were being driven away, a tremendous clamour arose resembling the roar of the sea buffeted by the winds.

Seeing them dispersing, whilst confusion was created amongst them, Rama in affection for them, grew indignant at their departure and, highly incensed, with a glance that seemed as if it would consume him, addressed the exceedingly intelligent Bibishana in terms of reproach, saying :—

" Why, disregarding me, dost thou harass them, are they not my people ? Her conduct, not raiment, walls, seclusion or other royal prohibitions, are a woman's shield. In times of calamity, peril, war, the Swyamvara or the nuptual ceremony, it is not forbidden to behold a woman unveiled. It is not prohibited to look upon a woman who has fallen into distress and difficulty, above all in my presence. Therefore, leaving the palanquin, let Vaidehi come hither on foot so that the dwellers in the woods may see her at my side."

Hearing Rama's words, Bibishana became thoughtful and conducted Sita to him reverently, whilst Lakshmana, Sugriva and also Hanuman, hearing Rama speak thus, were saddened.

Then Maithili, confused and shrinking within herself, approached her lord accompanied by Bibishana ; and it was with astonishment, delight and love that Sita, whose husband was a god, gazed on Rama's gracious appearance, she whose own face was still beautiful. Beholding the countenance of her dearly loved lord, whom she had not seen for so long and which was as radiant as the full moon when it rises, she cast aside all anxiety and her own face became as fair as the immaculate orb of the night.

CHAPTER 117

Rama repudiates Sita

BEHOLDING Maithili standing humbly beside him, Rama gave expression to the feelings he had concealed in his heart, saying :—

" O Illustrious Princess, I have re-won thee and mine enemy

has been defeated on the battlefield; I have accomplished all that fortitude could do; my wrath is appeased; the insult and the one who offered it have both been obliterated by me. To-day my prowess has been manifested, to-day mine exertions have been crowned with success, to-day I have fulfilled my vow and am free. As ordained by destiny the stain of thy separation and thine abduction by that fickle-minded titan has been expunged by me, a mortal. Of what use is great strength to the vacillating, who do not with resolution avenge the insult offered to them?

"To-day Hanuman is plucking the fruit of his glorious exploits, and Sugriva, who is valiant in war and wise in counsel, with his army is reaping the harvest of his exertions! Bibishana too is culling the fruits of his labours, he who cast off a brother, who was devoid of virtue, to come to me."

When Sita heard Rama speak in this wise, her large doe-like eyes filled with tears and, beholding the beloved of his heart standing close to him, Rama, who was apprehensive of public rumour, was torn within himself. Then, in the presence of the monkeys and the titans, he said to Sita, whose eyes were as large as lotus petals, her dark hair plaited, and who was endowed with faultless limbs:—

"What a man should do in order to wipe out an insult, I have done by slaying Ravana for I guard mine honour jealously! Thou wert re-won as the southern region, inaccessible to man, was re-gained by the pure-souled Agastya through his austerities. Be happy and let it be known that this arduous campaign, so gloriously terminated through the support of my friends, was not undertaken wholly for thy sake. I was careful to wipe out the affront paid to me completely and to avenge the insult offered to mine illustrious House.

"A suspicion has arisen, however, with regard to thy conduct, and thy presence is as painful to me as a lamp to one whose eye is diseased! Henceforth go where it best pleaseth thee, I give thee leave, O Daughter of Janaka. O Lovely One, the ten regions are at thy disposal; I can have nothing more to do with thee! What man of honour would give rein to his passion so far as to permit himself to take back a woman who has dwelt in the house of another? Thou hast been taken into Ravana's lap and he has cast lustful glances on thee; how can I reclaim thee, I who

boast of belonging to an illustrious House? The end which I sought in re-conquering thee has been gained; I no longer have any attachment for thee; go where thou desirest! This is the outcome of my reflections, O Lovely One! Turn to Lakshmana or Bharata, Shatrughna, Sugriva or the Titan Bibishana, make thy choice, O Sita, as pleases thee best. Assuredly Ravana, beholding thy ravishing and celestial beauty, will not have respected thy person during the time that thou didst dwell in his abode."

On this, that noble lady, worthy of being addressed in sweet words, hearing that harsh speech from her beloved lord, who for long had surrounded her with every homage, wept bitterly, and she resembled a creeper that has been torn away by the trunk of a great elephant.

CHAPTER 118

Sita's Lamentations; She undergoes the Ordeal by Fire

HEARING these harsh words from the wrathful Raghava, causing her to tremble, those fearful utterances, which till that time had never been heard by her and were now addressed to her by her lord in the presence of a great multitude, Maithili, the daughter of Janaka, overwhelmed with shame, pierced to the heart by that arrow-like speech, shed abundant tears. Thereafter, wiping her face, she addressed her husband in gentle and faltering accents, saying:—

"Why dost thou address such words to me, O Hero, as a common man addresses an ordinary woman? I swear to thee, O Long-armed Warrior, that my conduct is worthy of thy respect! It is the behaviour of other women that has filled thee with distrust! Relinquish thy doubts since I am known to thee! If my limbs came in contact with another's, it was against my will, O Lord, and not through any inclination on my part; it was brought about by fate. That which is under my control, my heart, has ever remained faithful to thee; my body was at the mercy of another; not being mistress of the situation, what could

I do ? If despite the proofs of love that I gave thee whilst I lived with thee, I am still a stranger to thee, O Proud Prince, my loss is irrevocable !

" When, in Lanka, thou didst dispatch the great warrior Hanuman to seek me out, why didst thou not repudiate me then ? As soon as I had received the tidings that I had been abandoned by thee, I should have yielded up my life in the presence of that monkey, O Hero ! Then thou wouldst have been spared useless fatigue on mine account and others lives would not have been sacrificed, nor thine innumerable friends exhausted to no purpose. But thou, O Lion among Men, by giving way to wrath and by thus passing premature judgement on a woman, hast acted like a worthless man.

" I have received my name from Janaka, but my birth was from the earth and thou hast failed to appreciate fully the nobility of my conduct, O Thou who are well acquainted with the nature of others. Thou hast had no reverence for the joining of our hands in my girlhood and mine affectionate nature, all these things hast thou cast behind thee ! "

Having spoken thus to Rama, weeping the while, her voice strangled with sobs, Sita addressed the unfortunate Lakshmana, who was overwhelmed with grief, saying :—

" Raise a pyre for me, O Saumitri, this is the only remedy for my misery ! These unjust reproaches have destroyed me, I cannot go on living ! Publicly renounced by mine husband, who is insensible to my virtue, there is only one redress for me, to undergo the ordeal by fire ! "

Hearing Vaidehi's words, Lakshmana, the slayer of hostile warriors, a prey to indignation, consulted Raghava with his glance and by Rama's gestures he understood what was in his heart, whereupon the valiant Saumitri, following his indications, prepared the pyre.

None amongst his friends dared to appeal to Rama, who resembled Death himself, the Destroyer of Time ; none dared to speak or even to look upon him.

Thereafter Vaidehi, having circumambulated Rama, who stood with his head bowed, approached the blazing fire and, paying obeisance to the Celestials and brahmins, Maithili, with joined palms, standing before the flames, spoke thus :—

"As my heart has never ceased to be true to Raghava, do thou, O Witness of all Beings, grant me thy protection! As I am pure in conduct, though Rama looks on me as sullied, do thou, O Witness of the Worlds, grant me full protection!"

With these words, Vaidehi circumambulated the pyre and with a fearless heart entered the flames.

And a great multitude were assembled there, amongst which were many children and aged people who witnessed Maithili entering the fire. And, resembling gold that has been melted in the crucible, she threw herself into the blazing flames in the presence of all. That large-eyed lady, entering the fire, who is the Bearer of Sacrificial Offerings, appeared to those who watched her to resemble a golden altar. That fortunate princess entering the fire, which is nourished by oblations, seemed, in the eyes of the Rishis, Devas and Gandharvas, to resemble a sacrificial offering.

Then all the women cried out:—'Alas!' on seeing her, like a stream of butter hallowed by the recitation of mantras, fall into the flames, and she appeared to the Three Worlds, the Gods, the Gandharvas and the Danavas like a goddess smitten by a curse and cast down from heaven into hell. Then, as she entered the flames, a great and terrible cry rose from the titans and the monkeys.

CHAPTER 119

Brahma's Praise of Rama

MEANWHILE the righteous Rama, hearing the lamentation of the masses, afflicted, pondered awhile and his eyes filled with tears.

Then the King Vaishravana and Yama with the Pitris, the Thousand-eyed Lord of the Celestials, Varuna, Lord of the Waters and Mahadeva the blessed Three-eyed God who rides the Bull, as also Brahma the Creator of the World, King of the Learned, all gathered together, having hastened there in their chariots as bright as the sun, coming to the City of Lanka to seek out Rama.

Lifting up their great arms and hands adorned with jewels, they made obeisance with joined palms and the King of the Gods addressing Raghava, said :—

" O Creator of the Universe and foremost of those versed in the spiritual science, how canst thou manifest indifference to Sita falling into the flames ? How art thou unaware that thou thyself art the Chief of the Gods ? Formerly thou wert the Vasu Ritadhaman, the Progenitor of the Vasus ! Thou art the Creator of the Three Worlds, Swyamprabhu, the eighth Rudra and the fifth of the Sadhyas. The Twin Ashwins are thy two ears, the sun and moon thine eyes ; these are the forms at the beginning, middle and end of creation in which thou dost appear, O Scourge of Thy Foes ; and yet thou dost distrust Vaidehi as if thou wert an ordinary man ! "

Thus addressed by the Protector of the Worlds, the Leader of the Gods, Raghava, Lord of Peoples, Foremost of the Pious, answered :—

" I deem myself to be a man, Rama, born of Dasaratha ; who then am I in reality ? From whence have I come ? Let the Grandsire of the World inform me ! "

Thus spoke Kakutstha and Brahma, foremost of those who know the truth, addressed him saying :—

" Thou art the great and effulgent God Narayana, the fortunate Lord armed with the discus. Thou art the One-Tusked Boar, the Conqueror of thy Foes in the past and the future. Thou art the imperishable Brahman, Existence Itself, transcending the three divisions of time ; Thou art the Law of Righteousness, the Four-armed, the Bearer of the Sharnga Bow ; Thou art the Subduer of the senses, the Supreme Purusha ; Thou art invincible, Thou art the Holder of the Dagger, Thou art Vishnu, Thou art Krishna and of immeasurable might ; Thou art Senani and Gramani, the Controller of passions, the Origin and Dissolution ; Thou art Upendra and the Slayer of the Demon Madhu, Thou art the Creator of Indra and Indra Himself ; Thou art the Lotus-navelled One ; Thou dost bring combat to an end. The great and divine Rishis acknowledge Thee as their refuge and protector. Thou art the Himalayas of a hundred peaks, the Essence of the Vedas, the God of a Hundred Tongues, the Great Bull, Thou thyself art the Creator of the

World, Swyamprabhu; Thou art the Refuge and Elder of the Siddhas and Sadhyas; Thou art the Sacrifice, the sacred syllable 'Vashat' and 'Aum', the greatest of the great. None knows thine origin or end or who Thou really art. Thou art manifest in all beings, in the cows and the brahmins; Thou pervadest all regions, the firmament, the mountains and the rivers, Thou, the Thousand-footed God, the Thousand-headed One, Thou of a Thousand Eyes! Thou art the support of all beings and the earth. When the earth is withdrawn, under the form of a great serpent, Thou dost appear on the waters supporting all the worlds and the Gods, Gandharvas and Danavas, O Rama. I am thy heart and the Goddess Saraswati, thy tongue; the Gods are the hairs of Thy body, I, Brahma created them thus. When Thou dost close thine eyes, it is night and when Thou dost open them, it is day. The Vedas are Thy Samskaras[1]; nothing exists apart from thee; the whole universe is Thy body, the earth Thy forbearance; Agni Thy wrath, Soma Thy beneficence, the Shrivatsa Mark, Thy holy symbol.

"Thou didst cover the Three Worlds in three strides; Thou didst bind the terrible Bali and establish Mahendra as King. Sita is Lakshmi and Thou, the God Vishnu, Krishna and Prajapati. It was in order to slay Ravana that Thou didst enter a human body. This task that we entrusted to Thee has been accomplished, O Thou, the foremost of those who observe their duty. Ravana having fallen, do Thou ascend to heaven joyfully! Thy might is irresistible, O Rama, and thine exploits are never fruitless. To behold Thee and offer adoration to Thee is never unprofitable! It is not in vain that men are devoted to Thee on earth. Those who are ever faithful to Thee, attain to Thee who art the primeval Purusha and their desires will be fulfilled in this world and the other worlds. Those who recite this eternal, ancient and traditional theme, transmitted by the Rishis, will never suffer defeat."

[1] Samskaras—Latent Impressions.

CHAPTER 120

Sita is restored to Rama

HEARING those excellent words uttered by the Grandsire, Vibhabasu, who bore Vaidehi in his lap, having extinguished the pyre, rose up, and that Bearer of Sacrificial Offerings, assuming a corporeal form, stood up and took hold of the daughter of Janaka. Then that youthful woman, beautiful as the dawn, wearing ornaments of refined gold, attired in a red robe, having dark and curly hair, wearing fresh garlands, the irreproachable Vaidehi was restored to Rama by the God of Fire.

Thereafter the Witness of the whole world, Pavaka, addressed Rama, saying :—

" Here is Vaidehi, O Rama, there is no sin in her ! Neither by word, feeling or glance has thy lovely consort shown herself to be unworthy of thy noble qualities. Separated from thee, that unfortunate one was borne away against her will in the lonely forest by Ravana, who had grown proud on account of his power. Though imprisoned and closely guarded by titan women in the inner apartments, thou wast ever the focus of her thoughts and her supreme hope. Surrounded by hideous and sinister women, though tempted and threatened, Maithili never gave place in her heart to a single thought for that titan and was solely absorbed in thee. She is pure and without taint, do thou receive Maithili ; it is my command that she should not suffer reproach in any way."

These words filled Rama's heart with delight and he, the most eloquent of men, that loyal soul, reflected an instant within himself, his glance full of joy. Then the illustrious, steadfast and exceedingly valiant Rama, the first of virtuous men, hearing those words addressed to him, said to the Chief of the Gods :—

" On account of the people, it was imperative that Sita should pass through this trial by fire ; this lovely woman had dwelt in Ravana's inner apartments for a long time. Had I not put the innocence of Janaki to the test, the people would have said :— ' Rama, the son of Dasaratha is governed by lust ! ' It was well

known to me that Sita had never given her heart to another and that the daughter of Janaka, Maithili, was ever devoted to me. Ravana was no more able to influence that large-eyed lady, whose chastity was her own protection, than the ocean may pass beyond its bournes. Despite his great perversity, he was unable to approach Maithili even in thought, who was inaccessible to him as a flame. That virtuous woman could never belong to any other than myself for she is to me what the light is to the sun. Her purity is manifest in the Three Worlds ; I could no more renounce Maithili, born of Janaka than a hero his honour. It behoveth me to follow your wise and friendly counsel, O Gracious Lords of the World."

Having spoken thus, the victorious and extremely powerful Rama, full of glory, adored for his noble exploits, was re-united with his beloved and experienced the felicity he had merited.

CHAPTER 121

Dasaratha appears to Rama

HEARING those excellent words uttered by Raghava, Maheshvara addressed him with even greater eloquence, saying :—

" O Lotus-eyed One, O Thou the possessor of long arms and a broad chest, O Scourge of Thy foes, fortunate it is that thou hast accomplished this great feat, O Most Pious of Men !

" O Rama, it is well for all beings that thou hast dispelled this deep and dreadful darkness of the whole world, this fear created by Ravana. Go now and console the unfortunate Bharata with thy presence, the illustrious Kaushalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra, the mother of Lakshmana. Rule over Ayodhya, giving satisfaction to thine innumerable friends and establish the dynasty of the Ikshvaku Race. O Mighty Hero, having performed the Ashvamedha Sacrifice and acquired supreme renown, having distributed wealth among the brahmins, do thou attain the highest state.

" Behold King Dasaratha standing in his chariot, thy sire, thy superior in the world of men, O Kakutstha ! Having crossed the

sea of relativity by thy grace, full of glory he has entered the region of Indra ; with thy brother Lakshmana pay homage to him ! "

Hearing the words of Mahadeva, Raghava who was accompanied by Lakshmana, bowed before his sire, who was standing in his aerial car on high, and that prince with his brother Lakshmana beheld his sire blazing in his own effulgence, clad in spotless raiment. With extreme delight, King Dasaratha, standing in his chariot, once again beheld his son who was as dear to him as his own life and that long-armed warrior, on his seat, took him in his lap and embracing him, said :—

" Far from thee I do not prize the heaven in which I dwell with the Gods, O Rama, this is the truth ! O Most Eloquent of Men, the words addressed to me by Kaikeyi, which were designed to effect thy banishment, have never been erased from mine heart ! Embracing thee and Lakshmana and beholding thee well and happy, I am delivered from mine affliction as the sun when the mist has been dispelled. By thy grace, O My Son, thou who art truly filial and of noble soul, I am redeemed, as was the virtuous Brahmin Kahola by Ashtavakra. Now it is made clear to me, O Dear Child, that in order to destroy Ravana, the Gods determined that the supreme Purusha should become incarnate as man.

"Assuredly Kaushalya will see all her desires fulfilled, O Rama, when she beholds thee returning from the forest, O Slayer of Thy Foes. O Rama, the people, seeing thee returning to the city and installed as king and ruler of the world, will indeed be blessed ! I desire to see thee re-united with Bharata, thy devoted, valiant, pure and loyal brother. Thou hast passed fourteen years in the forest with my beloved Sita and Lakshmana, O Dear Child. The term of thine exile is over, thy vows honoured, and further, by slaying Ravana on the battlefield, thou hast gratified the Gods. Thy task is accomplished ; thou hast won infinite renown, O Slayer of Thy Foes ; now, installed as king, mayest thou with thy brothers live for a long time ! "

With joined palms, paying obeisance to King Dasaratha, who had thus addressed him, Rama answered :—

" O Virtuous Sire, give thy blessings to Kaikeyi and Bharata ! Thou didst pronounce a terrible curse upon them, saying :—' I

renounce thee and thy son!', may this malediction not fall on Kaikeyi or her son, O Lord." 'Be it so!' replied that great monarch, paying obeisance with joined palms to Rama who had spoken thus, and thereafter embracing Lakshmana, he said to him:—

"Thou hast acquired extreme merit, O Pious One, and thy fame will be great on earth; by Rama's grace thou shalt attain heaven and thy power shall be inconceivable. Attend on Rama and be happy, O Thou who art the increaser of Sumitra's delight. Rama is ever engaged in the welfare of all beings. The Three Worlds with their Indras, the Siddhas and the great Rishis do honour to that great hero and adore him as the supreme Purusha. He, thy brother, is the invincible, imperishable Brahman, the essence of the Veda, which is secret, and the Inner Ruler of all, O Dear Child! Thou hast acquired great merit and glory in serving him and the Princess of Videha with devotion!"

Having spoken thus to Lakshmana, the King paid obeisance to Sita who stood before him with joined palms, and addressed her in gentle tones, saying:—

"My Daughter, do not take it ill that Rama renounced thee! O Vaidehi, he acted thus in thine own interest in order to demonstrate thine innocence! The proof of thy chaste conduct, which thou hast given to-day, places thee above all other women. O My Daughter, thou hast no need to be instructed regarding thy duty towards thy husband, nevertheless I must tell thee that he is the Supreme God."

Having thus addressed his two sons and Sita, King Dasaratha, the descendant of Raghu, ascended to the region of Indra in his chariot. Mounted on his aerial car, full of majesty, his body blazing with effulgence, that foremost of men, having given his counsel to his two sons and Sita, returned to the abode of the Sovereign of the Gods.

CHAPTER 122

On Rama's request Indra restores the Army

KING DASARATHA having departed, Mahendra, the Vanquisher of Paka, addressed Raghava, who stood before him with joined palms, and said :—

" O Rama, O Lion among Men, our presence here must not prove unfruitful ; we are pleased with thee ; ask what thou desirest ! "

Hearing these magnanimous words of the blessed Mahendra, Raghava, of compassionate soul, answered him joyfully :—

" Since thou wishest to gratify me, O Chief of the Vibudhas, grant me that which I ask of thee ! O Most Eloquent of Orators, let all the valiant monkeys, who for my sake descended into the region of death, be resuscitated and live again. I wish to see all those monkeys happy, who for my sake left their sons and wives, O Great Lord.

" Those courageous monkeys, those heroes who courted death and, crowning their sacrifice, succumbed, do thou restore to life, O Purandara ! Devoted to mine interests they disregarded death ; be gracious enough to give them back to their families ; I solicit this favour of thee ! I wish to see the Golangulas and the Bears in all their former energy, freed from their sufferings and their wounds, O Munificent God. Let there be flowers, roots and fruits, even though they be out of season, and rivers with pure water in abundance wherever the monkeys are to be found."

Hearing these words of the magnanimous Raghava, Mahendra answered graciously :—

" Hard indeed to fulfil is this boon, thou dost crave, O Dear Prince of the Raghus, but my words never prove vain ; so be it ! May all those who have been slain in battle by the titans, the Bears and the Gopucchas, whose heads and arms have been severed, be resurrected ! May those monkeys rise up exalting, without pain or wounds, in all their natural vigour and courage, like sleepers who wake at the end of night, and let them be re-united with their friends, relatives and tribes ! O Thou, the

Wielder of the Great Bow, may the trees be laden with fruit and flowers even out of season and the rivers be full of pure water."

Thereupon those excellent monkeys, who were formerly covered with wounds, rose up healed, as persons who have been asleep, and there was general astonishment amongst the monkeys, who questioned each other, saying, 'What is this?'

Seeing his purpose fulfilled, the Gods, in an excess of joy, unanimously addressed Rama, who was accompanied by Lakshmana, praising him and saying :—

"Now return to Ayodhya, O King and disband the monkeys; do thou console the devoted and illustrious Maithili! Seek out thy brother Bharata who, in sorrow of thy separation, has given himself up to penances. Approach the magnanimous Shatrughna and all thy mothers, O Scourge of Thy Foes! Be installed as king and rejoice the hearts of the citizens by thy return!"

Having spoken thus to Rama who was accompanied by Saumitri, the Gods, paying obeisance to him, joyfully returned to heaven in their chariots blazing like the sun; and Rama with his brother ordered the encampment of the army.

Thereafter, under Rama and Lakshmana's protection, that great and glorious company of happy people, radiant with splendour, resembled the night illumined on all sides by that orb of cool rays.

CHAPTER 123

Bibishana places the Chariot Pushpaka at Rama's disposal

HAVING passed the night, Rama the conqueror of his foes, rose happily and Bibishana, paying obeisance to him with joined palms, addressed him, saying :—

"Here are various articles for bathing such as unguents, ornaments, sandalwood paste, raiment and celestial garlands of every kind. Lotus-eyed women, versed in the art of applying perfume await thy pleasure, as is fitting, O Raghava!"

At these words, Kakutstha answered Bibishana saying :—

"Do thou invite the foremost of the monkeys and Sugriva to bathe first, for the pious Bharata, accustomed to happiness, that

youthful and loyal hero is suffering on mine account. Far from Bharata, Kaikeyi's son, who has been loyal to his duty, I do not value bathing or raiment or jewels! Order it so that we may return to Ayodhya soon, assuredly the route is extremely arduous."

Thus did Rama speak and Bibishana answered :—

"I will arrange for thee to reach that city in one day, O Prince! May happiness attend thee! There is an aerial car named Pushpaka that shines like the sun, which the powerful Ravana forcibly took from Kuvera, having overcome him in combat. That celestial and marvellous chariot, going everywhere at will, is at thy disposal, O Thou of unequalled prowess! That car, bright as a cloud, which will transport thee to Ayodhya in perfect safety, is here. But if I am worthy of a boon, if thou dost recall any merit in me, then remain here for at least one day, O Virtuous One. If thou hast any friendship for me, then remain here with thy brother Lakshmana and Vaidehi, thy consort. Having received all possible homage, O Rama, thou shalt depart. I have prepared those honours dictated by mine affection, O Rama, do thou enjoy them with thine innumerable friends and thine army also. I beg thee in all humility, out of my profound esteem and feeling of friendship for thee, O Raghava; I am thy servant and therefore may not command thee."

Then Rama answered Bibishana, who had spoken thus in the presence of all the titans and monkeys and said :—

"O Hero, Thou hast honoured me with thy friendship with thine whole soul and in all thine actions hast proved thy supreme affection for me. Nevertheless I cannot accept thy request, O King of the Titans, because my heart urges me to see my brother Bharata again, he who came to Chittrakuta in order to bring me back to Ayodhya though, as he bowed before me, I did not listen to his appeal. I wish to see Kaushalya, Sumitra and the illustrious Kaikeyi, as also mine house, my friends, the people of the city and the country. Grant me leave, O Dear Bibishana, Thou hast paid me sufficient honour! Do not be angry, O My Friend, I beg of thee. O Foremost of the Titans, prepare the aerial car speedily, my task has been accomplished, what justification is there for remaining here longer?"

Hearing Rama's words, that Indra among the Titans, Bibi-

shana, hastened to order the aerial Chariot Pushpaka, gilded and bright as the sun, with its seats of emerald and pearl, its rooms ranged round about, silvered all over, its white banners and supports and gilded apartments enriched with golden lotuses which were hung with many bells. Round the windows, set with pearls and rare gems, rows of bells were placed giving forth a melodious sound, and that moving palace, resembling the peak of Mount Meru, constructed by Vishvakarma, abounded in rich ornaments, gold and jewels and sparkled with silver, and its floors were inlaid with crystal and the thrones of emerald (displayed there) furnished with rare coverings.

Having prepared that indestructible vehicle, the Chariot Pushpaka, which was as swift as thought, Bibishana stood before Rama, and that aerial car, that went everywhere at one's will and resembled a mountain, having been placed at his disposal, the magnanimous Rama who was accompanied by Saumitri, was astonished.

CHAPTER 124

Rama sets out for Ayodhya

THE Chariot Pushpaka, having been prepared and adorned with flowers, Bibishana, who stood a little way off with joined palms, reverently enquired of Rama with some urgency, saying :—

" What shall I do now, O Raghava ? "

Then the supremely illustrious Raghava, having reflected awhile, in the presence of Lakshmana, made answer affectionately, saying :—

"All the inhabitants of the woods have brought about the fulfilment of my mission by their efforts ; O Bibishana, do thou gratify them abundantly with jewels and riches of every kind. With their support thou hast recaptured Lanka, O Sovereign of the Titans ! Full of ardour, they did not fear to expose their lives nor did they ever retreat in combat. They have fulfilled their task ; now reward them by distributing gold and gems among them. When, in thy gratitude, thou hast loaded them with gifts, the monkeys will be fully satisfied.

"Thou dost know how to give and how to receive, thou art liberal and master of thy senses, all know thee to be a renunciate, it is for this that I address thee and exhort thee, O Prince; a king will wage war in vain and his army abandon him at the first opportunity if he be wholly devoid of those qualities that render him pleasing to all."

Hearing Rama's words, Bibishana bestowed precious gems and riches of every kind in abundance on all the monkeys and, beholding the foremost of the monkeys loaded with jewels and silver, Rama ascended the chariot of his adversary, holding the chaste and illustrious Vaidehi to his breast and accompanied by his brother Lakshmana, that valiant bow-man.

Standing in the chariot, Kakutstha bade farewell to all the monkeys, to the mighty Sugriva and to Bibishana and said:—

"O Foremost of Monkeys, you have accomplished all that could be asked of a friend, now go where you will, I give you all leave to depart. O Sugriva, thou who fearest nought but unrighteousness, thou hast done all that a devoted and loyal companion could do; return to Kishkinda at the head of thine army. And thou, Bibishana, occupy the throne of Lanka that I have conferred upon thee. Even the inhabitants of heaven and their chiefs will not be able to trouble thee. I go to Ayodhya, that was the royal residence of my sire and wish to take leave of you all and to offer you my salutations!"

Thus did Rama speak and all the leaders of the monkeys and the monkeys themselves as also the Titan Bibishana, paying obeisance with joined palms, answered:—

"We desire to go to Ayodhya, take us all with thee! We shall delight in ranging the woods and copses and assisting at thine installation, of which thou art worthy. Having paid obeisance to the Queen Kaushalya, we shall return to our homes without delay, O Greatest of Kings!"

Thus did they speak and the virtuous Rama answered the monkeys, Sugriva and Bibishana, saying:—

"Nothing would be more agreeable to me, as also to mine innumerable friends, than to return to the capital with you all. Hasten to take thy place with thy monkeys in the chariot, O Sugriva, and thou too, O Bibishana with thy ministers, O King of the Titans."

Thereupon Sugriva with the monkeys and Bibishana with his counsellors, took their places in the celestial Pushpaka Chariot and, all being installed, that marvellous aerial car belonging to Kuvera rose into the air under Raghava's command. In the chariot, which shone brightly, and was harnessed to swans, Rama exulted, overcome with delight, and resembled Kuvera himself, whilst all the monkeys, bears and titans, full of vigour, seated comfortably in that celestial car travelled at ease.

CHAPTER 125

Rama tells Sita of the Places over which they are passing

UNDER Rama's command, that aerial chariot harnessed to swans flew through the air with a great noise, and Rama, the delight of the Raghus, letting fall his glance on every side, said to the Princess of Mithila, Sita, whose face resembled the moon :—

" See how Lanka has been constructed by Vishvakarma on the summit of the Trikuta Mountain, which resembles the peak of Mount Kailasha. Behold the battlefield covered with a mire of flesh and blood ; there, O Sita, a great carnage of monkeys and titans took place. There lies the ferocious King of the Titans, Ravana, who, despite the boons he had received, was slain by me on thine account, O Large-eyed Lady.

" Here Kumbhakarna was struck down as also another ranger of the night ; Prahasta and Dhumraksha perished here under the blows of the monkey, Hanuman. Vidyunmalin was put to death at this spot by the great-souled Sushena, and in another, Lakshmana overcame Indrajita, the son of Ravana. Angada struck down the Titans named Vikata and Virupaksha, hideous to look upon, as also Mahaparshwa and Mahodara. Akampana succumbed, as also other valiant warriors, Trishiras, Atikaya, Devantaka and Narantaka, Yuddhonmatta and Matta, both great heroes, Nikumbha and Kumbha, the two sons of Kumbhakarna, who were full of courage ; Vajradamshtra, Damshtra and

innumerable other titans perished here and the invincible Maharaksha whom I slew in combat; and Akampana[1] was slain and the powerful Shonitaksha whilst Yupaksha and Prajangha also succumbed in the great struggle. Vidyujjihva, a titan of fearful aspect fell there and Yajnashatru died also; the migbty Suptaghna too, as also Suryashatru, were slain with Brahmashatru, who had no equal, and here Mandodari's consort, for whom she wept surrounded by her companions to the number of a thousand or more.

" Here is the place where the ocean was traversed, O Lady of Lovely Looks, and, having passed over the sea, there is the spot where the night was spent. There the bridge that I had thrown over the ocean of salty waves on thine account, O Large-eyed Lady, that causeway, difficult of construction, was built by Nala. Behold the ocean, O Vaidehi, that indestructible abode of Varuna's that seems without bourne, whose thundering waters abound in conch shells and pearls. O Maithili, behold that golden mountain, which, cleaving the waves, rose out of the bosom of the deep in order to allow Hanuman to rest. And here, our headquarters were established; here, formerly the Lord Mahadeva granted me a boon and there is the sacred and purifying spot known as Setubandha[2] where even the greatest sins are washed away. Here Bibishana, King of the Titans, first came to me. Now we have reached Kishkindha with its beautiful woods, it is Sugriva's capital where I slew Bali."

Then Sita, seeing the City of Kishkindha of which Bali was formerly the support, said to Rama in gentle, loving and wistful tones :—

" I desire to enter thy royal capital, Ayodhya, O Prince, with the beloved consorts of Sugriva, Tara at their head, as also the wives of the other leaders of the monkeys ! "

Thus spoke Vaidehi and Raghava answered, 'So be it!', thereafter reaching the heights of Kishkindha, he caused the aerial chariot to halt and said to Sugriva :—

" O Lion among Monkeys, command all the Plavamgamas, accompanied by their wives, to come to Ayodhya with Sita and

[1] Akampana appears twice; it is not known if it refers to the same warrior or another.

[2] This place is still to be seen near Rameshwara—a place of pilgrimage.

myself. Let all come, O King, and make haste to depart, O Sugriva!"

Hearing Rama's command, he whose energy was immeasurable, Sugriva, the illustrious monarch of the monkeys, attended by his ministers entered the inner apartments and, seeing Tara, said to her :—

"O Dear One, at the command of Raghava, who wishes to gratify Vaidehi, do thou speedily assemble the consorts of the magnanimous monkeys so that they may leave for Ayodhya to visit the wives of King Dasaratha."

Hearing Sugriva's words, Tara, of beautiful limbs, gathered all the female monkeys together and said to them :—

"Sugriva commands us to leave for Ayodhya; do me the favour of accompanying me and witness the entry of Rama in the midst of the people from town and country and the splendour of the wives of Dasaratha."

Thus commanded by Tara, the female monkeys, having first adorned themselves and circumambulated her, ascended the car, anxious to behold Sita, and that aerial chariot at once rose into the air with them.

Then Raghava, gazing down on all sides, having reached the vicinity of Rishyamuka, once more addressed Vaidehi, saying :—

"O Sita, here is a great mountain resembling a cloud rent by lightning, abounding in gold and other metals. It is here that I met that Indra among Monkeys, Sugriva, and entered into an agreement with him to slay Bali. Here is the Pampa Lake with its marvellous fields of blue lotuses and here separated from thee, out of the depth of mine affliction, I wept! It was on its banks that beheld the virtuous Shabari.

"Here I slew Kabandha, whose arms extended for four miles! O Sita, in Janasthana, I came upon that magnificent tree, the Ashwatta, near which Jatayu, the renowned and valiant Monarch of Birds perished under Ravana's blows on thine account, O Lovely One. And there is our hermitage, O Lady of Brilliant Complexion, where our enchanting leafy hut may be seen. It is there that thou wert borne away by force by the King of the Titans.

"There is the ravishing Godavari of transparent waters and there, the retreat of Agastya can be seen, that is covered with

palms, as also Sharabhanga's hermitage where the God of a Thousand Eyes, the Destroyer of Cities, entered in secret. O Goddess of slender waist, behold the ascetics with Atri at their head, the equal of Surya and Vaishnava; in that place the Giant Viradha fell under my blows and there, O Sita, thou didst visit the virtuous Sage. See, O Lady of beautiful form, the King of Mountains, Chittrakuta, appears; it is there that the son of Kaikeya came to crave my forgiveness. Here is the enchanting Yamuna with its ravishing woods and here the retreat of Bharadwaja looms into view, O Maithili. Now we are in sight of the Ganges, that three-branched sacred river. There is the City of Shringavera where my friend, Guha, dwells, and there, the River Sarayu with rows of stone pillars on its banks commemorating the Kings of the House of Ikshvaku! Behold there the royal abode of my Sire! O Vaidehi, bow down to Ayodhya, we have returned!"

During this time the monkeys and the titans were leaping about in delight on seeing that city and, with the palaces with which it abounded, its wide spaces and the elephants and horses that filled it, Ayodhya appeared to the monkeys and titans to resemble Amaravati, the city of the mighty Indra.

CHAPTER 126

Rama's Meeting with the Sage Bharadwaja

HAVING completed the fourteen years of exile, on the fifth day of the lunar fortnight, the elder brother of Lakshmana reached the hermitage of Bharadwaja and bowed low before that Ascetic. Paying obeisance to him, he enquired of the Sage, saying:—

"O Blessed One, dost thou know if all are well and happy in the city? Is Bharata fixed in his duty? Do my mothers still live?"

Thus did Rama question Bharadwaja and that great Sage, smiling, answered the Prince of the Raghus cheerfully and said:—

"Bharata, his locks matted, carrying out thine instructions,

awaits thy return. In the presence of thy sandals, to which he pays homage, he rules all in the best interests of thy family and country.

"Beholding thee clad in bark, setting out on foot, thy consort making the third,[1] banished from thy kingdom, entirely devoted to thy duty, obedient to the behests of thy sire, renouncing every pleasure, like unto a God driven from heaven, formerly I was filled with pity for thee; then, O Victorious Warrior, thou, dispossessed by Kaikeyi, nourished thyself on fruits and roots; but now I see thee, thy purpose accomplished surrounded by friends and kinsfolk, having triumphed over thine enemy and my joy is supreme!

"I know all that thou hast experienced of good and ill whilst dwelling in Janasthana, O Raghava, and how, engaged in procuring the welfare of the Sages, seeking to protect them all, thine irreproachable consort was borne away by Ravana. I know of the appearance of Maricha and Sita's delusion; the meeting with Kabandha; thine arrival at Lake Pampa, the alliance with Sugriva when Bali fell under thy blows; the search for Vaidehi and the exploit of the Wind-god's son; the construction of the causeway by Nala and the finding of Vaidehi; how Lanka was set on fire by the foremost of the monkeys whilst he was bound; how Ravana, proud of his strength, fell in the fight with his sons, kinsfolk, ministers, infantry and cavalry; how after the death of Ravana, who was a thorn in the side of the Gods, thou didst meet the Celestials and receive a boon from them; all these things I know by virtue of my penances, O Hero, O Thou who art fixed in virtue.

"Therefore I have sent my disciples to carry the news to the city and I too will grant thee a boon, O Most Skilful of Warriors; but first accept the Arghya, to-morrow thou shalt go to Ayodhya,"

Hearing these words, the illustrious prince, with bowed head, answered joyfully, 'It is well!' and made the following request:-

"On the road I take to reach Ayodhya, though it is not the season, yet may all the trees bear honeyed fruits and those fruits have the fragrance of 'Amrita'[2] and may every variety be found there; O Blessed One!"

[1] Rama and Lakshmana being the other two.
[2] Amrita—Nectar of Immortality.

Thereupon the Sage replied: "So be it! Thy desire shall be realised immediately!" Then the trees of that region instantly resembled those of Paradise. Those that had none, grew fruits, and those that had no flowers were covered with blossom; trees that had withered were enveloped with foliage and all dripped with honey for three leagues along the way.

Meanwhile the foremost of the monkeys regaled themselves on those celestial fruits to the extent of their desire and, transported with joy, imagined they had entered heaven.

CHAPTER 127

Rama sends Hanuman to seek out Bharata

When he beheld Ayodhya, that descendant of Raghu of rapid step full of magnanimity, gave himself up to pleasant thoughts and, having reflected awhile, that fortunate and illustrious hero said to the monkey, Hanuman:—

"Hasten with all speed to Ayodhya, O Foremost of Monkeys, and ascertain if all are happy in the royal palace. Passing Shringavera, communicate with Guha, King of the Nishadas, who dwells in a wooded country, and offer him my salutations. When he hears that I am safe and well, freed from all anxieties, he will be content, for he is my second self and my friend. He will gladly show thee the way to Ayodhya and give thee tidings of Bharata. Do thou enquire of Bharata as to his well-being and inform him that I have returned with my consort and Lakshmana, my mission accomplished. Tell him of Sita's abduction by the ruthless Ravana, of my meeting with Sugriva and the death of Bali in combat; of how I set out to find Maithili and how thou didst discover her, having crossed the great waters of that domain of the unchangeable Lord of Rivers! Tell him of our arrival on the shores of the sea, the appearance of Sagara and how the causeway was constructed; how Ravana perished; of the boons bestowed on me by Mahendra, Brahma and Varuna and, by the favour of Mahadeva, the meeting with my Sire.

Inform Bharata, O My Friend, that I am coming accompanied by King Bibishana and the Lord of the Monkeys. Say to him, 'Having overcome the army of the enemy and attained a glory without parallel, Rama, his purpose accomplished, is approaching with his valiant friends'. Do thou carefully observe the expression on the face of Bharata when he hears these tidings and how he comports himself. Thou wilt know all by his gestures, the colour of his face, his glances and his words. Whose mind would not be moved by the thought of (ascending) an ancestral throne, fulfilling all one's dreams, and to a kingdom abounding in prosperity, hosts of elephants, horses and chariots? If the fortunate Bharata wishes to reign in his own right, then, by mutual agreement, let that descendant of Raghu govern the entire earth!"

On receiving these instructions, Hanuman, born of Maruta, assuming human form, left in all haste for Ayodhya and advanced with speed, like unto Garuda swooping on a great serpent on which he wishes to lay hold. Traversing the path-way of his sire, the shining abode of great birds and, crossing over the formidable confluence of the Ganges and the Yamuna, he reached the City of Shringavera. Then the valiant Hanuman sought out Guha and said to him, his voice ringing with joy:—

"Thy friend, Kakutstha, that true hero who is accompanied by Sita as also Saumitri, enquires as to thy welfare. Having spent the fifth night of the moon with the Sage Bharadwaja, on his request, Raghava has now taken leave of him and thou wilt see him to-morrow."

Having said this, the illustrious and agile Hanuman, whose hair stood on end with delight, rushed on regardless of fatigue. Thereafter he crossed the river sacred to Parasurama, and the Valukini, Varuthi and Gaumati and the formidable forest of Sala Trees, also many densely populated countries and opulent cities. Having journeyed a great distance that foremost of monkeys came to the flowering trees that grow in the neighbourhood of Nandigrama and resemble those of Chaitaratha, the gardens of the King of the Celestials. There he beheld people who, with their wives, sons and grandsons, well-attired were given up to enjoyment in those pleasant surroundings.

Thereafter, at a distance of one league from Ayodhya, he

observed Bharata, clad in a black antelope skin, sad, emaciated, wearing matted locks, his limbs besmeared with dust, dwelling in a hermitage, afflicted on account of his brother's misfortune. Living on fruit and roots, practising penance, self-controlled, his hair knotted, dressed in bark and a black antelope skin, disciplined, pure of soul, like unto a Brahmarishi in radiance, he, having placed Rama's sandals before him, ruled the earth by protecting the four castes from every peril with the aid of his ministers, and virtuous priests and senior officers wearing red robes surrounded him. And his subjects, faithful to their duty, had resolved not to neglect the welfare of their king, who resembling, righteousness itself, seemed to be the God of Dharma incarnate.

Then Hanuman, paying obeisance with joined palms, said to that loyal prince :—

" Thy brother, Kakutstha, for whose exile to the Forest of Dandaka in robes of bark and matted locks, thou grievest, enquires as to thy welfare. I bring thee good tidings, O Prince, abandon thy despair ; the moment has come when thou wilt be re-united with thy brother Rama. Having slain Ravana and recovered Maithili, Raghava is returning with his valiant friends, his purpose accomplished. The mighty Lakshmana too is coming and the illustrious Vaidehi, Rama's devoted companion, as Sachi is to Mahendra."

Hearing Hanuman's words, Bharata, the son of Kaikeyi swooned with joy, felicity causing him to lose consciousness. In a moment, however, the descendant of Raghu, Bharata, rose up breathing with an effort and addressed Hanuman who had brought him those pleasant tidings. Deeply moved, the fortunate Bharata, embracing the monkey bedewed him with his tears that fell from him in great drops, inspired not by suffering but by joy, and said :—

" Whether thou be god or man who has come hither out of compassion for me, O My Friend, I wish to bestow a gift on thee for the happy tidings thou hast brought me. I offer thee a hundred thousand cows, as also a hundred prosperous villages and sixteen youthful women for thy consorts, possessed of curls, with sweet expressions, golden skins, shapely noses, lovely ankles and gracious mien, resembling the moon, adorned with every kind of ornament, all of noble families."

Hearing from that Prince of Monkeys of the miraculous return of Rama, Bharata, whose desire to behold his brother again threw him into a transport of delight, added joyfully :—

CHAPTER 128

Hanuman tells Bharata of all that befell Rama and Sita during their exile

" VERILY it is with joy that I learn these tidings of my protector after the innumerable years that he has passed in the forest. How felicitous is the well-known saying, ' Happiness comes to man even if it be after a hundred years ! ' How did Raghava and the monkeys conclude an alliance and for what purpose ? Answer my questions candidly ! "

Thus interrogated by the prince, Hanuman, seating himself on a heap of Kusha Grass, began to describe Rama's life in the forest and said :—

" O Lord, thou knowest how he was exiled on account of the two boons bestowed on thy mother ; how the King Dasaratha died in consequence of his son's banishment ; how the messengers, O Lord, brought thee back from Rajagriha ; how, returning to Ayodhya, thou didst refuse the crown ; how thou didst go to Chittrakuta to appeal to thy brother, the scourge of his foes, begging him to accept the throne, thus conforming to the way of virtuous men ; how Rama renounced the kingdom and how, on returning, thou didst bring back the sandals of that illustrious hero ; all this, O Long-armed Warrior is well-known to thee but what happened subsequent to thy departure, now hear from me !

"After thy return, distress seized the denizens of the forest, creating a great turmoil. Thereupon Rama, Sita and Lakshmana entered the huge, dreadful and lonely Dandaka Forest that was trodden down by elephants and formidable with its lions, tigers and deer. Having penetrated into its depths, the powerful Viradha appeared before them emitting fearful cries. Lifting him up, as he was roaring like a great elephant, those two

warriors threw him headlong into a pit and having accomplished that difficult exploit, the two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, at dusk reached the enchanting hermitage of Sharabhanga. That Sage having ascended to heaven, Rama, a true hero, paid obeisance to the ascetics and thereafter went to Janasthana.

" Fourteen thousand titans, who dwelt in Janasthana, were slain during the time that the mighty Raghava resided there. For having fallen into the hands of the only Rama, during the fourth watch, those demons were wholly exterminated. Taking advantage of their great power, in order to harass the ascetics, those demons, inhabitants of the Dandaka Forest, were slain by Rama in combat. The demons slain and Khara also, Rama then despatched Dushana and subsequently Trishiras. Thereafter a female demon, named Shurpanakha, accosted him and, being ordered to do so, Lakshmana, rising, took up his sword and instantly cut off her ears and nose. Thus mutilated, that titan woman took refuge with Ravana.

" Then a redoubtable titan in Ravana's service, named Maricha, assuming the form of a jewelled deer, beguiled Vaidehi, who, on beholding it, said to Rama :—

" ' O My Beloved, capture it for me, it will enliven our solitude.'

" Raghava, bow in hand, rushed out in pursuit of that deer and destroyed it with a single arrow, O My Friend.

" While Raghava, however, was thus engaged in the chase, Lakshmana too had left the hermitage, and Dashagriva, entering there, speedily took hold of Sita, as Graha seizes Rohini in the sky. Slaying the Vulture Jatayu, who sought to deliver her, the titan, taking hold of Sita, departed in all haste for his capital. Meanwhile some strange looking monkeys, as large as hills, standing on the summit of a mountain, astonished, observed Ravana, the King of the Titans proceeding with Sita in his arms ; and, mounting into the sky with her in the Chariot Pushpaka, which was as swift as thought, the all-powerful Ravana returned to Lanka. There he entered his vast palace decorated with pure gold and, with many words, sought to console Vaidehi but she, regarding his speech and his person with disdain and as less than a straw, was imprisoned in the Ashoka Grove.

" Meantime Rama returned, having slain the deer in the forest and, as he did so, he beheld the vulture so beloved of his sire, dead, at which he suffered extreme distress. Thereafter Raghava with Lakshmana set out in search of Vaidehi and they crossed the Godavari River with its flowering woodlands.

" In the great forest, the two princes met a titan, named Kabandha, counselled by whom that true hero repaired to the Mountain Rishyamuka in order to confer with Sugriva and, even before they met, they were firm friends.

" Sugriva had formerly been banished by his irascible brother Bali and, in consequence of this meeting, a sound alliance was formed between them. Rama, by the strength of his arms established him on the throne, having slain Bali, that giant full of valour, in the field. Regaining his kingdom, Sugriva vowed in return to set out with all the monkeys in order to find the princess and, under the command of their magnanimous sovereign, ten kotis of those Plavamgamas repaired to different regions.

" Whilst, discouraged, we were resting on the lofty Vindhya Mountain, plunged in despair, a long time passed. Meanwhile the powerful brother of the King of the Vultures, named Sampati, informed us that Sita was dwelling in Ravana's palace, whereupon I, whom thou seest here, was able to dispel the grief of my companions and, resorting to mine own prowess, crossed over a hundred leagues of sea and discovered Maithili alone in the Ashoka Grove, clad in a soiled silken cloth, stained with dust, afflicted yet faithful to her conjugal vow. Approaching that irreproachable lady I paid obeisance to her and bestowed a ring on her in Rama's name as a pledge, and she, in her turn, gave me a brilliant jewel.

" My mission accomplished, I returned and gave Rama that token, the bright gem ; and he, receiving tidings of Maithili, regained his zest for life, as one, who in extremity, drinks Amrita. Summoning up his strength, he resolved to overthrow Lanka, as, when the time has come, Vibhabasu prepares to destroy the worlds.

" Reaching the shores of the sea, the Prince commanded Nala to construct a causeway and the army of valiant monkeys crossed the ocean on that bridge.

" Prahasta fell under the blows of Nila, Kumbhakarna under those of Raghava, Lakshmana slew Ravana's son and Rama, Ravana himself. Having been received by the Granter of Boons, Shakra, as also Yama, Varuna and Mahadeva, Swyambhu and Dasaratha, Rama was showered with favours by all the Rishis. The glorious Kakutstha, Scourge of His Foes, was rendered happy by obtaining these boons and returned to Kishkindha accompanied by the monkeys in the Chariot Pushpaka.

" He has reached the Ganges once more and is dwelling with the Sage,[1] where without hindrance, thou shouldst behold him to-morrow, when the Pushya Star is in an auspicious aspect ! "

Thereupon, hearing Hanuman's delightful words, Bharata, full of joy, paid obeisance to him and, in accents pleasing to the heart, said :—

"After a long time my desires are at last fulfilled ! "

CHAPTER 129

Bharata sets out to meet Rama

HEARING those marvellous tidings, Bharata, that real hero, the slayer of hostile warriors, delighted, issued a command to Shatrughna, saying :—

" Let all righteous men, having purified themselves, worship all the Deities and sacred altars of the city with fragrant garlands and diverse musical instruments. Let the bards conversant with the tradition and all the panegyrists, with the queens, ministers, guards, the army, the courtiers, brahmins, nobles and the foremost of the artisans issue forth from the capital in companies, in order to behold the countenance of Rama, which is as lovely as the moon."

At this behest, Shatrughna, the slayer of hostile warriors, called together some thousands of labourers, whom he divided into groups, and he said to them :—

" Fill up the hollows and level the uneven ground from Ayodhya to Nandigrama. Sprinkle every part with water as cold as ice and let others scatter roasted grain and flowers

[1] The Sage Bharadwaja.

everywhere; set up large standards on all the main highways of the capital. At the rising of the sun, let all the dwellings be adorned with crowns and garlands, with many flowers and decorations in five colours; let contingents of soldiers stand along the royal highway to keep it free."

At this command from Shatrughna, which filled everyone with joy, Dhristi, Jayanti, Vijaya, Siddhartha, Arthasadhaka, Ashoka, Mantrapala and Sumantra set out. Thousands of elephants intoxicated with ichor and female elephants with golden girths, bearing standards, splendidly adorned, on which illustrious warriors were mounted, issued forth, whilst others set out on horses and in chariots also, and warriors armed with spears, cutlasses and nets, furnished with banners and pennants were escorted by the foremost of their leaders and thousands of infantry.

Thereafter the litters, bearing the consorts of King Dasaratha, with Kaushalya and Sumitra at their head, also set out. And Bharata, ever fixed in his duty, surrounded by the Twice-born, the elders of the city, the merchants and counsellors with garlands and sweetmeats in their hands, rejoiced by the sound of conches and drums, his praises sung by panegyrists, having placed the sandals of the illustrious Rama on his head, took up the white parasol decorated with bright garlands and two golden chowries made of Yaks tails, worthy of a king. Then that magnanimous prince, emaciated by long fasting, pale, wearing robes of bark and a black antelope skin, yet full of joy at the tidings of his brother's approach, set out with his escort to meet Rama and the sound of the horses hooves, the noise of the chariot wheels, the blare of conches and beat of drums, the roaring of elephants, the blast of trumpets and booming of gongs caused the earth to tremble as the whole city proceeded to Nandigrama.

Thereafter Bharata, glancing round, said to Hanuman, the son of Pavana :—

"Is it due to the levity of thy monkey nature that I do not behold Kakutstha, the illustrious Rama, Scourge of His Foes? Neither are those monkeys, able to change their form at will, to be seen!"

To these words, Hanuman, testifying to the truth, answered the virtue-loving Bharata, saying :—

"That sylvan army has reached the trees covered with fruit and flowers, flowing with honey, where the humming of bees intoxicated with love can be heard. All this was created by virtue of a boon bestowed by Vasava on the Sage Bharadwaja, as a reward for his great hospitality. One can hear their shouts of delight and, to my mind, those monkeys have crossed the River Gaumati. Observe that immense cloud of dust near the wood; in mine estimation, the monkeys are shaking the boughs of the Sala Trees; behold that aerial chariot, bright as the moon, which can be seen in the distance, it is the celestial Car Pushpaka created by Brahma's thought and was obtained by that hero after he had slain Ravana and his kinsfolk. Glittering like the rising sun, that celestial chariot, swift as thought, that is bearing Rama, belongs to Dhanada, who received it from Brahma. In it are the two valiant brothers, offspring of the House of Raghu, accompanied by Vaidehi, the supremely illustrious Sugriva and the Titan Bibishana."

At that moment, from women, children, youthful persons and the aged, the joyful clamour 'Rama has come!' arose, reaching the skies.

Alighting from their chariots, elephants and horses in order to go on foot, the people beheld that prince standing in his aerial car, resembling the moon in the sky. With joined palms, Bharata advanced joyfully to meet Rama, to whom he paid obeisance, offering him water wherewith to wash his hands and feet, as also the Arghya.

In that chariot, created by Brahma's thought, the elder brother of Bharata with his large eyes, looked as radiant as the God who bears the Thunderbolt. Then Bharata, with a deep bow, paid reverence to his brother Rama, who was seated in the car, like unto the sun on the summit of Mount Meru, and at Rama's command, that swift and excellent vehicle, harnessed to swans, descended to earth. Then the faithful Bharata approaching Rama, full of joy paid obeisance once more, and Kakutstha, drawing Bharata to him, whom he had not seen for a long time, caused him to sit on his lap, embracing him affectionately. Thereafter, Bharata, the scourge of his foes, approached Lakshmana and Vaidehi and saluted them lovingly; then the son of Kaikeyi embraced Sugriva, Jambavan, Angada, Mainda,

Dvivida, Nila and Rishabha also, and Sushena, Nala, Gavaksha, Gandhamadana, Sharabha and Panasa, clasping them in turn in his arms.

In the form of men, those monkeys, able to change their shape at will, gaily wished Bharata good fortune ; then, after embracing him, that prince, full of valour, said to Sugriva, that lion among monkeys :—

" We are four brothers, thou shalt be the fifth, O Sugriva ; benevolence creates friendship and malevolence enmity ! "

Thereafter Bharata addressed Bibishana in comforting words, saying :—

" Be thou blessed ; thy co-operation ensured the success of this difficult enterprise ! "

At that instant, Shatrughna, having paid obeisance to Rama and Lakshmana, bowed reverently to the feet of Sita. Then Rama approached his mother, who was pale and drawn with grief and, prostrating himself, touched her feet, thus rejoicing her heart, after which he saluted Sumitra and the renowned Kaikeyi, thereafter paying obeisance to the other Queens and his spiritual preceptor.

Then all the citizens, with joined palms said to Rama :— " Be thou welcome, O Long-armed Hero, thou art the increaser of Kaushalya's delight ! "

To the elder brother of Bharata, those thousands of hands joined in salutation caused the inhabitants of the city to appear like a lotus in flower.

Then Bharata, conversant with his duty, himself took Rama's sandals and fastened them on the feet of that Indra among Men and thereafter, with joined palms, said to him :—

" This kingdom that I received in trust, I now render back to thee in its entirety. To-day, since I see thee as Lord of Ayodhya, the purpose of mine existence has been fulfilled and my desires consummated. Now examine thy treasury, thy storehouses, thine house and thine army ; by thy grace, I have increased them tenfold ! "

These words uttered by Bharata out of fraternal love, caused the monkeys and the Titan Bibishana to shed tears. Thereafter, in his joy, Raghava made Bharata sit on his lap and, with his chariot and army, proceeded to the hermitage.

Reaching that place with Bharata and his troops, Rama alighted from his aerial car and thereafter spoke to that most excellent chariot, saying :—

" Now go hence and place thyself at Vaishravana's disposal, I give thee leave to depart."

Thus dismissed by Rama, that excellent car proceeded in a northerly direction and reached Dhanada's abode. The celestial Car Pushpaka, which had been borne away by the Titan Ravana, returned at Rama's command with all speed to Dhanada.

As Shakra touches the feet of Brihaspati, Raghava, having touched the feet of his friend, his spiritual preceptor, seated himself by his side, a little way apart, on an excellent seat.

CHAPTER 130

Rama is installed as King : The Benefits that accrue from the Recitation and Hearing of the Ramayana

RAISING his joined palms to his forehead, Bharata, the increaser of Kaikeyi's delight, said to his elder brother, Rama, that true hero :—

" Thou hast honoured my mother by conferring the kingdom on me ; now I give back to thee that which was entrusted to me. How can I, who am but a young steer, bear the heavy load that one full grown is scarcely able to sustain ? To my mind, it is as hard to preserve the boundaries of this kingdom as to build up a dam which has been swept away by a torrent. How can a donkey outpace a horse or a crow surpass a swan in flight ? Nor am I able to follow in thy footsteps, O Hero, O Scourge of Thy Foes ! As a tree with a vast trunk and branches, planted in a courtyard, that has grown immense and difficult to climb, dries up when it has blossomed without yielding any fruit, so, O Long-armed Prince, if, being our master, thou dost not uphold us all, we thy servants, are in the same case !

" Let the universe to-day witness thine enthronement, O Raghava, thou who art as radiant as the sun at noon in all its effulgence. From henceforth, let it be to the sound of gongs,

the tinkling of girdles and anklets and the gentle strains of melodious singing that thou dost wake and fall asleep. Do thou rule the world as long as the sun revolves and the earth endures."

Hearing Bharata's words, Rama, the conqueror of hostile cities, answered 'So be it!' and took his place on an excellent seat.

Thereafter, at the command of Shatrughna, skilled and deft-handed barbers quickly surrounded Raghava; and first Bharata bathed and the mighty Lakshmana also, then Sugriva, that Indra among Monkeys, followed by Bibishana, the Lord of the Titans; whereupon Rama, his matted locks shorn, performed his ablutions and he was clothed in robes of great price, covered with garlands and sprinkled with every kind of perfume; thereafter he re-appeared blazing in his own effulgence. The hero, Bharata, attended on Rama's robing and Shatrughna, the upholder of the prosperity of the Ikshvakus, on Lakshmana's, and all the consorts of King Dasaratha attended on Sita. Kaushalya, in love of her son, herself adorned all the consorts of the monkeys with joy.

Then Shatrughna, having issued the command, Sumantra harnessed a magnificent chariot and when that celestial car, bright as flame, had been brought before him, Rama, that long-armed warrior, conqueror of hostile citadels, took his place therein. Sugriva and Hanuman, whose beauty equalled Mahendra's, bathed and attired in robes of divine loveliness and sparkling earrings, followed; thereafter Sugriva's consorts, as also Sita, advanced eager to behold the capital.

In Ayodhya all the ministers of King Dasaratha, with Rama's spiritual Preceptor Vasishtha, at their head, took counsel as to what ought to be done; and Ashoka, Vijaya and Siddhartha, with undivided mind, entered into consultation regarding the honours to be paid to Rama by the city and said:—

"Prepare all that is needed for the coronation of the magnanimous Rama, who is worthy of this honour, beginning with the benedictory prayer."

Having issued these orders, the ministers as also the spiritual Preceptor set forth from the city in haste, in order to behold Rama, who resembled the God of a Thousand Eyes in his chariot drawn by bay horses. And Raghava, seated in his car, proceeded

along the highway to his capital; Bharata took up the reins, Shatrughna the parasol, Lakshmana the fan and Sugriva one of the chowries, whilst that Indra among the Titans, Bibishana, held the second that was made of Yaks tails of dazzling whiteness and like unto the moon, waving it to and fro over the prince, behind whom he stood. At that instant, the sweet music of Rama's praises rang out in the sky sung by companies of Rishis and Gods with the Marut Hosts.

The illustrious Sugriva, that bull among the monkeys, was mounted on an elephant named Shatrumjaya, as high as a hill, and nine thousand elephants carried the monkeys, who in the form of men, proceeded along the way, adorned with ornaments of every kind.

Then that Lord of Men advanced towards the city encircled with palaces, to the sound of conches and the roll of drums; and the inhabitants of the city beheld Raghava radiant with beauty advancing in his chariot, and, having exchanged salutations, they took up their places behind Kakutstha, the magnanimous Rama, surrounded by his brothers. In the midst of his counsellors, the brahmins and the people, Rama shone with splendour like unto the moon amidst the stars; and, as he advanced along the highway, preceded by the musicians and those who bore the Swastika on the palms of their hands, he was attended by a joyous crowd. Before Rama marched those who carried roasted grain and gold, and virgins and kine were there with the Twice-born and men with their hands full of Modaka.[1]

Meantime Rama informed his ministers of his alliance with Sugriva and of the prowess of the son of Anila; and the monkeys and the inhabitants of Ayodhya were astounded by the narrative concerning the monkeys' exploits and the valour of the titans. Whilst relating these incidents, the illustrious Rama, who was attended by the Vanaras, entered Ayodhya, which was filled with healthy and happy people, and where every house was decorated.

Thereafter they came to the ancestral dwelling, the abode of the descendants of Ikshvaku, and that prince, the delight of the House of Raghu, paid obeisance to Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi and thereafter addressed Bharata in gentle and reasonable words saying:—

[1] Modaka—A kind of sweetmeat.

" Let Sugriva stay in the magnificent palace, set amidst the woods in the Ashoka Grove, which abounds in pearls and emeralds."

At these words, Bharata, that true hero, took Sugriva by the hand and led him into the palace. Meanwhile servants bearing oil lamps, couches and carpets entered immediately as commanded by Shatrughna and the exceedingly valiant younger brother of Raghava said to Sugriva :—

" Do Thou, O Lord, issue thy commands for Rama's coronation ! "

On this, Sugriva gave over four golden urns encrusted with gems to the monkey leaders, saying :—

" To-morrow, at dawn, see to it that ye return with your urns filled from the four seas, O Monkeys."

At this command, those powerful monkeys, resembling elephants, immediately rose into the air, so that they looked like swift eagles, and they were Jambavan, Hanuman, Vegadarshin and Rishabha, who brought back their urns filled with water, whilst five hundred other monkeys drew water in their jars from five hundred rivers. The mighty and valorous Sushena returned with his vessel, adorned with every variety of gem, bearing water from the eastern sea ; Rishabha, without delay, brought water from the southern sea ; Gavaya, with his urn powdered with red sandal and camphor, filled it at the vast ocean of the west, and Hanuman, the marvellous son of Anila, who was as swift as the wind, with his huge urn, encrusted with diamonds, drew water from the icy northern sea.

Beholding the water brought by those foremost of monkeys for Rama's coronation, Shatrughna, attended by servants, imparted the tidings to the chief Priest Vasishtha, and his companions, and that venerable one hastened there with the brahmins, whereupon he caused Rama accompanied by Sita, to ascend a throne inlaid with precious gems. Then Vasishtha, Vijaya, Javali, Kashyapa, Katyayana, Gautama and Vamadeva consecrated that lion among men with pure and fragrant water, as the Vasus crowned Vasava of a Thousand Eyes.

Then the Ritvijs and the Brahmins with sixteen virgins, counsellors, warriors, as also the merchants, were full of joy and Rama was sprinkled with pure water, and the Celestial Beings,

standing in the firmament with the Lokapalas and the Gods assembled to anoint him with the juice of all the sacred herbs.

And having been crowned by the magnanimous Vasishtha, the priests placed royal vestments upon him; and Shatrughna bore the immaculate shining canopy, and Sugriva, the King of the Monkeys, the chowry made of Yaks tails, the Lord of the Titans, Bibishana carrying the second, that was as bright as the moon. Thereafter, on Vasava's command, Vayu bestowed on Raghava a brilliant golden garland embellished with a hundred lotuses, and a necklace of pearls enriched with every variety of gem was also conferred on that Lord of Men by Shakra.

The Gods and Gandharvas sang and troops of Apsaras danced at the installation of the virtuous Rama, who was worthy of that honour. The earth too was covered with rich crops and the trees with their fruit and flowers gave forth their fragrance in honour of Raghava. Hundreds and thousands of horses, cows and heifers were distributed amongst the Twice-born by that prince, who had already bestowed hundreds of bulls on the brahmins; and Raghava gave them thirty crores of gold and rich attire and priceless ornaments.

Then a golden crown encrusted with precious stones, glittering like the sun's rays, was offered to Sugriva by that valiant leader of men, who bestowed two bracelets set with emeralds, the lustre of which rivalled the moon's, on Angada, the son of Bali. And Rama gave unto Sita a necklace of pearls embellished with gems that was without peer and like unto moonbeams, and celestial and immaculate raiment richly embroidered with superb ornaments. Then Vaidehi, the delight of Janaka, prepared to bestow her own necklace on the son of the Wind as a token and, unclasping it from her neck, she looked on all the monkeys and on her lord again and again, whereupon Rama, understanding her gesture and approving it, said to the daughter of Janaka:—

"Give the necklace to whom thou pleaseth, O Lovely and Illustrious Lady!"

Thereupon the dark-eyed Sita gave the necklace to the son of Vayu, and Hanuman, in whom courage, strength, glory, skill, capability and reserve, prudence, audacity and prowess were ever to be found, that lion among monkeys, adorned with that necklace,

looked as radiant as a mountain covered by a white cloud silvered by an aureole of moonbeams.

Thereafter all the elder and leading monkeys received fitting gifts of jewels and raiment, whereupon Sugriva, Hanuman, Jambavan and all those monkeys having been overwhelmed with favours by Rama of imperishable exploits, and received precious gems in addition, according to their merits, with all that their hearts could desire, returned joyfully from whence they had come; and Rama, the scourge of his foes, lord of the earth, sought out Dvivida, Mainda and Nila and satisfied all their wishes.

Thereupon the festival which they had attended being terminated, the foremost of the monkeys took leave of that lord of men and returned to Kishkindha. And Sugriva, the King of the Monkeys, having assisted at Rama's coronation and being overwhelmed with honours by him, went back to his capital.

Thereafter, Bibishana, that virtuous monarch, having obtained the kingdom of his forbears, returned to Lanka full of glory with the leading titans.

The supremely illustrious and magnanimous Raghava, having slain his foes, ruled his empire in peace, enhancing the joy of his people.

Devoted to virtue, Rama addressed Lakshmana who was fixed in his duty, saying :—

"O Faithful One, aid me in defending the land protected by the ancient kings with their armies. As was the custom of our ancestors in days of yore, do thou share the weight of state affairs with me as heir presumptive."

Yet, despite the earnest entreaties addressed to him, Saumitri did not accept the dignity, and the high-souled Rama conferred it on Bharata. Thereafter that prince performed the Paundarika, Ashvamedha, Vajimedha and other sacrifices of many kinds again and again. Reigning for ten thousand years, he offered up ten horse sacrifices, distributing immense wealth in charity, and Rama, whose arms reached to his knees, the powerful elder brother of Lakshmana, ruled the earth in glory and performed many sacrifices with his sons, brothers and kinsfolk. No widow was ever found in distress nor was there any danger from snakes or disease during his reign; there were no malefactors in his

kingdom nor did any suffer harm ; no aged person ever attended the funeral of a younger relative ; happiness was universal ; each attended to his duty and they had only to look on Rama to give up enmity. Men lived for a thousand years, each having a thousand sons who were free from infirmity and anxiety ; trees bore fruit and flowers perpetually ; Parjanya sent down rain when it was needed and Maruta blew auspiciously ; all works undertaken bore happy results and all engaged in their respective duties and eschewed evil. All were endowed with good qualities ; all were devoted to pious observances and Rama ruled over the kingdom for ten thousand years.

This renowned and sacred epic, the foremost of all, granting long life and victory to kings, was composed by the Rishi Valmiki, and he who hears it constantly in this world is delivered from evil ; if he desires sons he obtains them, if wealth he acquires it.

He who, in this world, listens to the story of Rama's enthronement, if he be a king, will conquer the earth and overcome his enemies. Women will obtain sons as Sumitra and Kaushalya obtained Rama and Lakshmana and Kaikeyi, Bharata.

The hearing of the ' Ramayana ' grants longevity and victory equal to Rama's, he of imperishable exploits. The one who, mastering his anger, listens with faith to this epic, formerly composed by Valmiki, overcomes all obstacles and those who hear this story set forth by Valmiki will return from their journeys in foreign lands and rejoice the hearts of their kinsfolk. They will obtain fulfilment of all the desires they conceive in this world from Raghava, and its recitation will bring delight to the Celestials ; it pacifies the adverse forces in those houses where it is to be found.

Hearing it, a king will conquer the earth ; if he be a stranger he will fare well ; women who hear this sacred epic in their pregnancy, will give birth to sons who are unsurpassed. He who recites it with reverence will be freed from all evil and live long. Warriors should listen to it recited by the Twice-born with bowed heads in order to achieve prosperity and obtain sons.

Rama is ever pleased with the one who hears this epic or who recites it in its entirety and he who does so will obtain a felicity comparable to Rama's, who is Vishnu, the Eternal, the Primeval God, the Long-armed Hari, Narayana, the Lord. Such are the

fruits produced by this ancient narrative. May prosperity attend thee! Recite it with love and may the power of Vishnu increase!

The Celestial Beings rejoice in the understanding and hearing of 'Ramayana' and the Ancestors are gratified. Those who, in devotion, transcribe this history of Rama, composed by the Rishi Valmiki, attain to the region of Brahma.

The hearing of this rare and beautiful poem in this world brings prosperous families, wealth and grain in abundance, lovely wives, supreme felicity and complete success in all undertakings.

This narrative which promotes long life, health, renown, brotherly love, wisdom, happiness and power should be heard in reverence by virtuous men desirous of felicity.

END OF YUDDHA KANDA

BOOK VII.

UTTARA KANDA

CHAPTER I

The Sages pay homage to Rama

WHEN Rama regained his kingdom, having slain the titans, all the Sages came to pay him homage.

Kaushika, Yavakrita, Gargya also, and Kanva, the son of Medhatithi, who dwelt in the eastern region; Svastiyatreya, the blessed Namuchi and Pramuchi, Agastya and Atri, the blessed Sumukha and Vimukha, led by Agastya, came from the southern region, and Nrishangu, Kavashin, Dhaumya and the great Rishi Kausheya, who inhabited the western region, also presented themselves with their disciples; and Vasishtha, Kashyapa, Vishvamitra, Gautama, Jamadagni and Bharadvaja came with the seven Rishis who were established in the northern quarter.

Reaching the palace of Raghava, those magnanimous ascetics who shone like Fire, the devourer of offerings, presented themselves at the gate and they were all conversant with the Veda and its component parts and versed in the various traditions.

Addressing himself to the doorkeeper, the virtuous Agastya, Prince of Sages, said to him:—

"Let the arrival of the ascetics be made known to the son of Dasaratha!"

Thereupon the vigilant guardian of the door, hearing these words from the Sage Agastya, instantly went away and, trustworthy, skilled in the art of procedure, instructed in conduct and gesture, he entered the presence of that magnanimous sovereign, who was as radiant as the full moon, and informed him of the arrival of that Prince of Sages, Agastya.

Learning that those ascetics, who resembled the rising sun, had come, Rama said to the door-keeper:—

"Usher them in with all due respect!"

Thereafter, when the Sages had entered, Rama rose in deference to them and honoured them with water and the Arghya, bestowing on each a cow.

Then Rama, bowing low, paid obeisance to them and caused raised and costly seats encrusted with gold to be brought, that

were covered with cushions of Kusha Grass and antelope skins, and those mighty Sages seated themselves according to rank and, questioned by Rama concerning their well-being, the great Rishis versed in the Veda, who were accompanied by their disciples, replied to him, saying :—

" O Long-armed Hero, Joy of the House of Raghu, all is well with us ! By the grace of heaven we behold thee happy and delivered from thine enemies ! By divine grace, O King, thou hast slain Ravana, that destroyer of the worlds, nor is it any great matter for thee to slay Ravana with his sons and grandsons ! Furnished with thy bow, thou canst undoubtedly destroy the Three Worlds ! By heaven's favour, we behold thee with Sita victorious to-day. We see thee with thy brother Lakshmana, who is devoted to thine interests, in the midst of thy mothers and other brothers, O Virtuous Prince. By the grace of heaven, the Rangers of the Night, Prahasta, Vikata, Virupaksha, Mahodara, Akampana and Durdharsha have perished. By divine grace, O Rama, Kumbhakarna, he, whose monstrous form had no equal in the world, was overthrown by thee in combat. Trishiras, Atikaya, Devantaka and Narantaka, those mighty night rangers, were struck down by thee, O Rama. By the grace of heaven, thou didst measure thy strength against that Indra of Titans whom the Gods themselves were unable to destroy and didst vanquish him in single combat. Assuredly it was no small matter for thee to overcome Ravana in fight but, by divine grace, thou wast able to join issue with Ravani and, in combat, slay him also.

" Once thou wast delivered from his magic bonds, O Long-armed Hero, by heaven's favour, thou didst triumph over that enemy of the Gods who bore down on thee like Time itself ! We marvelled to learn of the death of Indrajita ! By granting us the sacred and agreeable gift of security, thou hast enhanced thy victory, O Kakutstha, O Scourge of Thy Foes ! "

Hearing those pure-souled Sages speak thus, Rama was extremely surprised and, with joined palms, answered them, saying :—

" O Blessed Ones, I vanquished Kumbhakarna and that Ranger of the Night, Ravana, both of whom were filled with valour, why, therefore, do you praise me particularly on account

of Ravani? Since I vanquished Mahodara, Prahasta, the Titan Virupaksha, also Matta and Unmatta who were both invincible, and those great warriors, Devantaka and Narantaka, why this commendation on Indrajita's account? Did I not overcome those Rangers of the Night, Atikaya, Trishiras and Dhumraksha who were full of courage? Why, therefore, do you extol me because of Ravani? In what lay his special power, strength and prowess? How was he superior to Ravana? If I may learn it, for this is no command I lay upon you, if it be no secret that you may not reveal, I desire to know it, therefore speak! Shakra himself was vanquished by him; in virtue of what boon and from what source did the son derive those powers that his sire Ravana, did not possess? From whence did this titan gain pre-eminence over his father in combat? How was he able to triumph over Indra? Tell me now of all the boons he received, O Foremost of the Sages!"

CHAPTER 2

The Birth of Vishravas

THUS questioned by the magnanimous Raghava, the illustrious Kumbhayoni answered as follows :—

"Learn, O Rama, of the brilliant exploits of that warrior and how he slew his adversaries without being wounded by them; but first I shall tell thee of Ravana's birth and lineage, O Raghava, and thereafter of the rare boon accorded to his son.

"In former times, during the Kritayuga, there lived a son of Prajapati, O Rama, and that lord, Poulastya by name, was a Paramarishi equal to the Grandsire of the World Himself. One is unable to enumerate all the virtues he owed to his excellent character and it is sufficient to say that he was the son of Prajapati and, as such, was the favourite of the Gods. He was beloved of the entire world on account of his charming qualities and great wisdom. In order to pursue his ascetic practices, that foremost of Munis repaired to the hermitage of Trinabindu and took up his abode on the slopes of the great Mountain Meru.

There, that virtuous soul, his senses fully controlled, gave himself up to the practice of austerity, but some youthful maidens, whose fathers were Rishis, Pannagas and Rajarishis, wandering in those solitudes, disturbed him. Accompanied by Apsaras, they came to divert themselves in that place and, as it was possible to find fruits in every season and disport oneself in those woods, the young girls constantly went there to play. Attracted by the charms of Poulastya's retreat, they sang, played their instruments and danced, thus in full innocence, distracting the hermit from the exercise of his penances.

" On this, that mighty and exalted Sage cried out in indignation :—

" ' She who falls under my gaze, will instantly conceive ! '

" Thereupon all those maidens, who heard the magnanimous Sage, terrified of the brahmin's curse, left that place ; but the daughter of the Sage Trinabindu had not heard it. Entering the wood, wandering here and there without fear, she was unable to find the companions who had accompanied her.

"At that moment the illustrious and mighty Rishi, born of Prajapati, was concentrating on the sacred scriptures, his soul purified by asceticism. Hearing the recitation of the Veda, that youthful maiden approached, and beholding that treasury of asceticism, she instantly grew pale and manifested all the signs of pregnancy. Thereupon, discovering her condition, she became extremely bewildered and said :—

" ' What has happened to me ? ' Thereafter, realising the truth, she returned to her father's hermitage.

" On seeing her in that state, Trinabindu said :—' What means this strange condition in which thou dost find thyself ? '

" Thereat, with joined palms, the unfortunate girl answered that treasury of asceticism, saying :—

" ' I do not know, Dear Father, what has brought me to this pass. Preceded by my companions, I had gone to visit the sacred hermitage of that great and pure-souled Rishi Poulastya. Thereafter I was unable to find any of those who had accompanied me to the woods but, perceiving the alteration in my body, seized with fear, I returned here.'

" Then that Rajarishi Trinabindu, of radiant aspect, entered into meditation awhile and it was revealed to him that this was

the work of the ascetic and, the curse of that great and pure-souled Sage having been made clear to him, he, taking his daughter, went to where Poulastya was to be found and said to him :—

" ' O Blessed One, accept this daughter of mine in all her native perfection as alms spontaneously offered. O Great Rishi, assuredly she will ever be completely obedient to thee who art given to the practice of asceticism and to the mortification of the senses.'

" Hearing the words of the virtuous Rajarishi, that Twice-born One, who was willing to accept the young girl, said :—' It is well ! ' and, having given his daughter to that king of Sages, Trinabindu returned to his hermitage whilst the young wife remained with her consort, gratifying him with her virtue. Her character and conduct so charmed that powerful and exalted Sage that, in his delight, he addressed her, saying :—

" ' O Lady of lovely limbs, I am well pleased with thine outstanding virtues and will confer on thee a son like unto myself who will perpetuate both our houses ; he will be known by the name of Poulastya and, as thou hast listened to me reciting the Veda, he will also be called Vishravas.'[1]

" Thus, his heart filled with delight, did the ascetic speak to his divine consort and, in a short time, she gave birth to a son, Vishravas, who was famed in the Three Worlds and full of glory and piety. Learned, looking on all with an equal eye, happy in the fulfilment of his duty, like unto his sire inclined to asceticism, such was Vishravas.

[1] From the root ' Sru ', to listen.

CHAPTER 3

Vishravas becomes the Protector of Wealth

" THE son of Poulastya, that foremost of Munis, was not long in establishing himself in asceticism like his sire. Loyal, virtuous, devoted to the study of the Veda, pure, detached from all the pleasures of life, his duty was his constant aim.

"Hearing of the life he was leading, the great Muni Bharadwaja gave his own daughter of radiant complexion to him and Vishravas accepted Bharadwaja's daughter with traditional rites and began to consider how he might perpetuate his line and happiness. In extreme delight, that foremost of the ascetics, conversant with his duty, begot with his wife a wonderful child full of vigour, endowed with all the brahmic qualities.[1]

"At the birth of this child, his paternal grandfather was filled with joy, and Poulastya, beholding him, bethought himself how he might make him happy. 'He shall become the "Guardian of Wealth",' he said in his delight, which was shared by all the Sages, and he gave him a name, saying :—

"'Since the child resembles Vishravas, he shall be known as Vaishravana!'

"Thereafter Vaishravana, retiring to pastoral solitudes, grew up to resemble the mighty Anala, who is invoked at the time of sacrifice and, while he sojourned in that retreat, the thought came to that magnanimous one, 'I will pursue my supreme duty; the path of duty is the highest path'.

"For a thousand years he gave himself up to asceticism in the great forest and practising severe austerities, performed heavy penances. At the end of a thousand years, he underwent the following discipline—drinking water, he fed on air alone or took no nourishment whatsoever. A thousand ages passed like a single year, whereupon the mighty Brahma, accompanied by the Hosts of the Gods and their leaders, came to the hermitage and said to him :—

"'I am highly gratified with thine accomplishments, O Devoted Son, now choose a boon! May prosperity attend thee; thou dost merit a favour, O Sage!'

"Then Vaishravana answered the Grandsire of the World, who stood near and said :—

"'O Blessed One, I desire to be the saviour and protector of the world!'

"In the satisfaction of his soul, Brahma, who was accompanied by the Celestial Host, joyfully answered :—'So be it! It is my desire to create four Guardians of the Worlds. Now there shall be the region of Yama, the region of Indra, the region of Varuna

[1] Such as self-control, purity, austerity, etc.

and the one sought by thee. Go, O Virtuous Ascetic, and reign over the dominion of wealth! With Shakra, Varuna, the Lord of the Waters, and Yama, thou shalt be the fourth. Receive as thy vehicle this chariot named Pushpaka, which is as bright as the sun, and be equal to the Gods. Be happy, we shall now return from whence we came, having accomplished that which we had to do by conferring this double gift, O Dear Son!'

"With these words, Brahma withdrew to the region of the Gods and when the Celestial Host, with the Grandsire at their head, had gone to the heavenly region, Vaishravana, having become the Lord of Wealth, humbly addressed his sire with joined palms and said:—

"'O Blessed One, I have received a rare boon from the Grandsire of the World, but the divine Prajapati has not assigned me a dwelling place; do thou therefore counsel me, O Blessed One, O Lord, as to where an agreeable retreat may be found where no suffering comes to any living being.'

"At these words of his son, Vaishravana, the foremost of the ascetics answered saying:—

"'Hear, O Most Virtuous of Men! On the shores of the ocean, to the south there is a mountain named Trikuta. On its lofty summit, which is as great as the capital of the mighty Indra, the ravishing City of Lanka was constructed by Vishvakarma for the Rakshasas and it resembles Amaravati. Do thou dwell in Lanka and be happy! Do not hesitate! With its moats, golden walls, engines of war and the weapons with which it is filled, with its gold and emerald archways, that city is a marvel! The Rakshasas left it formerly in fear of Vishnu and it is deserted, all the demons having gone to the nethermost region. Now Lanka is empty and has no protector. Go and inhabit it, My Son, and be happy! No harm will visit thee there.'

"Hearing the words of his sire, the virtuous Vaishravana went to dwell in Lanka on the summit of the mountain, and soon, under his rule, it was filled with thousands of delighted Nairritas disporting themselves.

"That righteous King of the Nairritas, the blessed Sage Vaishravana, dwelt in Lanka, that city surrounded by the sea and, from time to time, the saintly Lord of Wealth, in the

Pushpaka Chariot, went to visit his father and mother. Hymned by the Hosts of the Gods and Gandharvas and entertained by the dances of the Apsaras, that Guardian of Wealth, radiating glory like unto the sun, went to visit his sire."

CHAPTER 4

Origin of the Rakshasas and of the Boons they received

THIS discourse of Agastya filled Rama with astonishment. "How was it that the Rakshasas formerly dwelt in Lanka?", such was the question that Rama put to the ascetic, shaking his head and casting wondering glances upon him from time to time.

He said:—"O Blessed One, the words 'Formerly Lanka belonged to the Eaters of Flesh' from thy lips causes me extreme surprise. We have been told that the Rakshasas were the offspring of Poulastya and now, thou affirmest that they owe their origin to a different source. Were Ravana, Kumbhakarna, Prahasta, Vikata and Ravani stronger than they? Who, O Brahmin, was their first king? What was the name of that one of terrific strength? For what fault were they driven out by Vishnu? Tell me all in detail, O Irreproachable Sage and, as the sun chases away the shade, so dispel my curiosity!"

Hearing Raghava's fair and eloquent words, Agastya, amazed, answered:—

"Formerly Prajapati created the waters, choosing that element as his source and, thereafter, in order to protect it, that lotus-born One generated all creatures. Then those beings, tormented by hunger and thirst, humbly presented themselves before their author and enquired saying:—

"'What shall we do?'

"Whereupon Prajapati, smiling, gave this answer to them all:—

'Protect the waters carefully, O Sons of Manu!' Then some said:—'Rakshami' (we will protect) and others 'Yakshami' (we will sacrifice). Thus addressed by those afflicted by hunger and thirst, the Creator said:—

"'Those among you who have said "Rakshami" shall be Rakshasas and those among you who have said "Yakshami" shall be Yakshas.'

"On this, two brothers sprang up, named Heti and Praheti, the equals of Madhu and Kaitabha, who were Rakshasas, oppressors of their foes; and the righteous Praheti withdrew to the solitudes to practice asceticism, but Heti did all in his power to find a wife and, immeasurably intelligent and of great wisdom, he espoused the sister of Kala, a young girl named Bhaya,[1] who was exceedingly terrifying; and that foremost of those possessing sons begot a son by the name of Vidyutkesha.

"The son of Heti, Vidyutkesha, was possessed of the splendour of the sun and grew like a lotus in a lake and that ranger of the night, having reached the bloom of youth, his sire resolved that he should wed. In the interests of his son he sought out the daughter of Sandhya, who was his equal in beauty, and Sandhya, reflecting 'a daughter must inevitably be given to some stranger' gave her to Vidyutkesha in marriage, O Raghava.

"Vidyutkesha, that ranger of the night, having received the daughter of Sandhya, began to divert himself with her as Maghavat with the daughter of Paulomi. After a time, O Rama, Salatantaka was filled with child, as a cloud is charged with water from the ocean.

"Repairing to the Mandara Mountain, the Rakshasi brought forth a child who was as beautiful as a cloud, even as Ganga had been delivered of an infant by the God of Fire. Having given birth to that child, she again desired to disport herself with Vidyutkesha and, forsaking her son, she rejoined her consort. Then the infant who had just been born and was as radiant as the autumnal sun, whose voice resembled the rumbling of a cloud, placing his fist in his mouth, cried for a long time, and Shiva, who was following the Path of the Wind, mounted on his bull and accompanied by Parvati, heard the sound of weeping and with Uma beheld the son of the Rakshasi who was crying. Allowing himself to be moved by compassion by his consort, Bhava, the Destroyer of Tripura, made him equal to his mother in age and bestowed immortality upon him. Thereafter the unchanging and imperishable Mahadeva bestowed an aerial car

[1] Bhaya—Fear.

upon him that traversed space, in order to gratify Parvati, and she, on her side, also conferred a boon on him, saying :—

" ' The Rakshasas shall conceive instantly and give birth as they conceive ; their children shall at once attain the age of their mothers.'

" Thereafter the highly intelligent Sukesha, proud of the favours he had received, having obtained this great fortune from the Lord Hara, began to range everywhere, displaying himself in his aerial car and resembling Purandara when he obtained heaven.

CHAPTER 5

The Story of the three Sons of Sukesha

" A GANDHARVA named Gramani, who was as effulgent as fire, had a daughter named Devavati in all the beauty of her youth, famed in the Three Worlds, equal to a second Shri,[1] and that virtuous Gandharva, beholding Sukesha to be thus endowed, gave her to him as a second Shri of whom he was the guardian.

"Approaching her beloved consort, who had attained a sovereign state by virtue of the boons he had received, as a mendicant on whom wealth has been conferred, Devavati was highly delighted. United to that woman, the ranger of the night appeared as majestic as a great elephant, the offspring of Aryama. In time Sukesha became a father, O Raghava, and begot three sons, the equals of the Three Sacrificial Fires, Malyavan, Sumali and Mali, the foremost of heroes, rivals of the Three-eyed God ; such were the sons of the Sovereign of the Rakshasas. In repose, they resembled the Three worlds, in action, they were like unto the three Sacrificial Fires,[2] as powerful as the Three Vedas and as formidable as the three humours of the body.[3]

" These three sons of Sukesha, shining like three fires, throve like

[1] Shri—The Goddess of Prosperity, Lakshmi.

[2] Three Sacrificial Fires—Garhapatya, Ahavaniya and Dakshina. See Glossary.

[3] Three Humours of the body—Wind, bile and phlegm.

diseases that have been neglected and, learning of the boons their sire had received, which had led him to increased sovereignty and which he owed to his asceticism, the three brothers repaired to Mount Meru in order to practice penance.

"Adopting a rigid and formidable course of austerity, O Foremost of Monarchs, those Rakshasas gave themselves up to fearful mortifications, sowing terror among all beings. On account of their penances, faith, virtue and equanimity, scarce to be witnessed on earth, they agitated the Three Worlds with the Gods, Asuras and men.

"Then the Four-faced Deity,[1] in his marvellous chariot, came to pay homage to the sons of Sukesha and said :—

"'It is I who am the conferrer of boons!'

"Whereupon they, recognizing him to be Brahma, the Dispenser of Favours, who was accompanied by the Indras and their Hosts, with joined palms, shaking like trees, answered him, saying :—

"'If our penance has found favour with thee, O Lord, then grant us the boons of remaining invincible, of destroying our enemies, of living long, of becoming powerful and of being devoted to one another.'

"'Let it be so!'" replied the God, who was a lover of brahmins, to the sons of Sukesha and he returned to Brahmaloka. Thereupon those rangers of the night, O Rama, who had become supremely arrogant on account of the boons they had received, began to harass the Gods and Asuras, and the Celestials with the companies of Rishis and Charanas, being thus persecuted and having no protector with whom they could take refuge, resembled beings in hell.

"Meantime, O Prince of Raghu, the three Rakshasas sought out the immortal Vishvakarma, the foremost of architects and joyously said to him :—

"'O Thou, who from thine own resources, created the palaces of the great Gods, strong, dazzling and impregnable, do thou in thy transcendent intelligence construct a dwelling for us of our own choosing on the Himavat, Meru or Mandara Mountains. Build us a vast abode equal to that belonging to Maheshvara.'

"Then the mighty-armed Vishvakarma spoke to the Rakshasas

[1] Four-faced Deity—Brahma.

concerning a residence equal to Indra's Amaravati and said :—

"'On the shores of the southern sea there is a mountain named Trikuta and there is also another named Suvela, O Princes of the Rakshasas. On the central peak resembling a cloud, inaccessible even to birds and which is hewn on four sides, is a city of thirty leagues in extent, covering a space of a hundred leagues in length. Surrounded by golden walls, pierced by gateways and furnished with terraces of gold, it is called Lanka, and was constructed by me at Shakra's command. Go and establish yourselves in that city, O Invincible Rakshasas, as the inhabitants of heaven dwell in Amaravati. When you occupy that Citadel of Lanka with the innumerable Rakshasas who surround you, none will be able to expel you and you will overcome your foes.'

"Thus counselled by Vishvakarma, the foremost of the Rakshasas followed by thousands of their companions went to inhabit the City of Lanka. Surrounded by strong walls and deep moats, it was filled with hundreds of golden palaces and there the rangers of the night began to dwell in great felicity.

"At that time, there lived a Gandharvi named Narmada, O Descendant of Raghu, and she had three daughters born of her own will, who were as lovely as Shri or Kirti. Though not of their race, she gave her three daughters, whose faces were as radiant as the full moon, to those three Indras among the Rakshasas. The youthful Gandharvis of supreme attraction were wedded by their mother under the Uttara Phalguni Constellation, which is presided over by the Deity Bhaga.[1]

"Having accepted their wives, O Rama, the sons of Sukesha diverted themselves with them, as the Celestials sport with the Apsaras. And the consort of Malyavan, Sundari[2] in name and nature, gave birth to many sons—Vajramushti, Virupaksha, Durmukha, Suptagna, Yajnakopa, Matta and Unmatta. Sundari had a daughter also, O Rama, the lovely Anala.

"On her side, the consort of Sumali, whose complexion resembled the full moon, was called Katumati and she was dearer to him than his own life. I will enumerate the offspring that ranger of the night begot with her according to their birth, O Great King :—

[1] Bhaga—An Aditya regarded in the Veda as presiding over love and marriage.
[2] Sundari—The name means 'Beautiful'.

"They were—Prahasta, Akampana, Vikata, Kalikamukha, Dhumraksha, Danda, Suparshwa of great energy, Samhradi, Praghasa, Bhasakarna, Raka, Pashpotkala, Kaikasi of gracious smiles and Kumbhanasi. These, we are told, were the offspring of Sumali.

"Mali's wife was the Gandharvi named Vasuda, who was supremely graceful, whose eyes resembled lotus petals and who rivalled the most ravishing of the Yakshis. Hear, O Lord Raghava, and I will tell thee of the offspring the youngest brother begot with her; they were Anala, Anila, Hara and Sampati; these sons of Mali became the counsellors of Bibishana.

"Meanwhile, those foremost of night-rangers surrounded by hundreds of their sons, in the intoxication of their extreme strength, harassed the Gods and their leaders with the Rishis, Nagas and Yakshas. Ranging the earth, irresistible as the tempest, ruthless as death in combat, overweeningly proud of their boons, they constantly impeded the sacrifices of the Sages.

CHAPTER 6

Vishnu goes to the defence of the Gods

"THUS afflicted, the Gods and Rishis, those treasuries of asceticism, terror-stricken, sought refuge with the God of Gods, Maheshwara, He Who creates and destroys the universe, the Inner Ruler, Who is unmanifest, the substratum of the worlds, the supreme Guru, adored by all. And the Gods, coming to that enemy of Kama,[1] the Destroyer of Tripura, addressed him in a voice shaking with fear, and said :—

"'O Bhagawat, the sons of Sukesha, wrought up with pride on account of the boons they have received from the Grandsire of the World, those scourgers of their foes, are oppressing the children of the Lord of Creatures. Our dwellings, which should be our refuge, no longer afford us shelter; having driven out

[1] Kama—The God of Love, who, having disturbed the meditations of Maheshwara was burnt to ashes by him by a single glance from his third eye.

the Gods from heaven, they themselves assume the rôle of Gods. "I am Vishnu", "I am Rudra". "I am Brahma". "I am the King of the Gods", "I am Yama", "I am Varuna", "I am the Moon", "Verily, I am the Sun", thus do Mali, Sumali and Malyavan speak, those Rakshasas, formidable in combat, who harass us as also those who precede them. We are terrified, O Lord, deliver us from fear; do thou assume a terrible form and subdue those thorns in the side of the Gods.'

"On this prayer from the united Gods being addressed to Kapardin,[1] of reddish hue, he, in deference to Sukesha answered the Celestial Host, saying:—

"'Nay, I shall not destroy these Rakshasas; I am not able to slay them, O Ye Gods, but I shall unfold to you how you may rid yourselves of them! This step having been taken, O Maharishis, go and seek refuge with the Lord Vishnu who will himself destroy them!'

"Thereupon, offering obeisance to Maheshwara, with jubilant cries they presented themselves before Vishnu, though filled with terror on account of those rangers of the night.

"Bowing down to the God who bears the conch and discus, they paid him great homage and, in trembling tones, denounced the sons of Sukesha, saying:—

"'O Lord, by virtue of the boons they have received, the three sons of Sukesha, like unto three fires, penetrated into our abode and took possession of it. Lanka is the name of that inaccessible citadel built on the summit of the Mount Trikuta; it is there that these rangers of the night, our persecutors, have established themselves. Come to our aid and destroy them, O Slayer of Madhu! We take refuge in Thee, be our deliverer, O Lord of the Gods! Do Thou offer up their lotus-like faces, severed by Thy discus, to Yama. In time of peril, none but Thee canst give us shelter, O Lord. As the sun dispels the mist, so do Thou dispel our terror in regard to these Rakshasas, who, with their adherents take delight in warfare!'

"When the Gods had spoken thus, the Lord of Lords, Janardana, who strikes terror in the hearts of his foes, re-assured them, saying:—

"'The Rakshasa Sukesha, who, on account of the boons

[1] Kapardin—Wearer of a Kaparda, a particular knot of hair.

received from Ishana, is intoxicated with pride, is known to me and his sons also, the eldest of whom is Malyavan. Those Rakshasas, the vilest of all, exceed all limits and I shall exterminate them in my wrath, O Ye Gods, have no fear!'

"Hearing the words of the mighty Janardana, Vishnu, each of the Gods returned to his abode, chanting His praises.

"Learning of the intervention of the Gods, that ranger of the night Malyavan, said to his two valiant brothers:—

"'The Immortals and the Rishis have unitedly sought out Shankara in order to bring about our destruction and addressed Him thus:—

"O Lord, the offspring of Sukesha, intoxicated with pride, by the power they received from those boons torment us without respite. Harassed by these Rakshasas, it is impossible for us, O Prajapati, to remain in our retreats for fear of those wicked ones; do Thou defend us and subdue them, O Three-eyed God, and, with Thy word of power 'Hum', burn them up, O Supreme Consumer.

"'Thus did the Gods speak and the Slayer of Andaka, shaking his head and hands, answered them saying:—

"'It is impossible for me to destroy the celestial children of Sukesha in the open field but I will tell you the means whereby they may be slain. Let the God who bears the Mace and Discus in His hands, who is clad in yellow, Janardana, Hari, Narayana, the Lord of Shri, be your refuge!'

"'Having received this counsel from Hara and taken leave of that enemy of Kama, the Gods went to Narayana's abode and related all to Him. Then Narayana said to the Gods, who had Indra at their head:—

"'I shall slay all your enemies, O Ye Gods, fear not!'

"'O Foremost of the Rakshasas, Hari promised those Gods, who were filled with terror, that He would destroy us. Therefore do what you think fit. Narayana has slain Hiranyakashipu and other foes of the Gods; Namuchi, Kalanemi, Samrhada that foremost of warriors, and Radheya, Bahumayin, the virtuous Lokapala and Yamala, Arjuna, Hardikya, Shumbha, Nishumbha, all those Asuras and Danavas, full of courage and strength, said to be invincible in the field, who had offered hundreds of sacrifices, were versed in magic and skilled in the use of weapons

and who were all a source of terror to their foes. Knowing this, it behoveth us to unite in order to slay the wicked Narayana who wishes to exterminate us.'

" Hearing Malyavan, their elder brother speak thus, Sumali and Mali answered him as the Twin Ashwins address Vasava, saying :—

" ' We have studied the Veda, made charitable gifts, offered sacrifices, safe-guarded our sovereignty, obtained the boon of longevity and freedom from disease and have established righteousness. Plunging our weapons into the bottomless ocean of the Gods, we have explored it ; we have overcome our enemies though their valour was unequalled ; nay, we have nothing to fear from Mrityu, Narayana, Rudra, Shakra and Yama, all hesitate to oppose us ! Since we have come together, let us assist each other mutually and exterminate the Gods, whose perfidy has been revealed to us.'

" Having taken counsel together thus, those huge-bodied and valiant Nairritas hurled themselves into the fray, like unto Jambha and Vritra of yore.

" O Rama, thus resolved, summoning up all their strength, they set out to fight, mounted on their chariots, elephants and horses that resembled elephants, mules, bulls, buffalo, porpoises, serpents, whales, turtle, fish, and birds resembling Garuda, also on lions, tigers, boars, deer and Yaks.

" Intoxicated with pride, all those Rakshasas marched out of Lanka, and those enemies of the Gods determined to lay siege to Devaloka. Perceiving the destruction of Lanka to be at hand, all the beings who inhabited it, recognizing the peril in which they stood, became wholly dispirited, whilst the Rakshasas, borne in marvellous chariots hastened towards Devaloka in hundreds and thousands, but the Gods avoided the path they had taken.

" Thereupon, at Kala's command, terrible portents appeared on earth and in the skies, foretelling the death of the Rakshasa leaders. From the clouds a torrent of hot blood and bones fell, the seas over-passed their bornes and the mountains shook. jackals of formidable aspect howled lugubriously, emitting hoarse laughter that resembled the rumble of clouds. Groups of phantoms passed by in succession, and flocks of vultures,

vomiting flames, hovered like fate over the Chief of the Rakshasas. Red-footed pigeons and crows fled in all directions, ravens croaked and two footed cats were seen.

" Disregarding these omens, the Rakshasas, proud of their strength, continued to advance without halting, caught in the noose of death. Malyavan, Sumali and Mali of immense power, preceded the Rakshasas like unto flaming braziers ; Malyavan, who resembled Mount Malyavan, was escorted by all the rangers of the night, as the Gods by Dhatar. That army of the foremost of the Rakshasas, thundering like massed clouds, eager for victory, advanced towards Devaloka under Mali's leadership

" Then the Lord Narayana, learning thereof from a messenger of the Gods, resolved to enter into combat with them. Making ready His arms and quivers, He mounted Vainateya and, having put on His celestial armour which shone like a thousand suns, He strapped on two dazzling quivers full of arrows. Buckling on His stainless sword, that God, Whose eyes resembled lotuses, furnished with His conch, discus, mace, sword, excellent weapons and His bow,[1] fully equipped, mounted the son of Vinata,[2] who was as high as a hill, and thereafter the Lord set out in all haste to slay the Rakshasas.

" On the back of Suparna, the dark-hued Hari, clad in yellow, resembled a cloud transpierced with lightning on the peak of a golden mountain. As He left, with His discus, sword, bow, spear and His conch in His hands, Siddhas, Devarishis, Great Serpents, Gandharvas and Yakshas hymned the praises of the renowned enemy of the Asura Host.

" With the blast of His wings, Suparna struck at the Host of the Rakshasas, bringing down their standards and dispersing their weapons so that they reeled like the dark summit of a mountain whose crags are crumbling away.

" With their excellent shafts however, soiled with flesh and blood, like unto the fires of doom at the end of the world cycle, which they loosed in thousands, those rangers of the night covered and pierced Madhava.

[1] Vishnu's bow, named ' Sharnga '.
[2] Son of Vinata—Garuda.

CHAPTER 7

The Combat between Vishnu and the Rakshasas

" In the midst of rumblings, the clouds in the form of Rakshasas poured down a shower of weapons on the Peak Narayana, as with their torrents they shroud a mountain, and the dark and immaculate Vishnu, surrounded by those swarthy and powerful rangers of the night, resembled Mount Anjana under rain. As locusts in a rice field or gnats in a flame, as flies in a pot of honey, as monsters in the deep, so did the arrows, keen as diamonds, swift as the wind or thought, which the Rakshasas loosed on Hari, piercing him, disappear as the worlds vanish at the time of universal destruction.

" Warriors in chariots or seated on the heads of elephants, soldiers on horseback, infantry stationed in the sky, leaders of the Rakshasas resembling mountains, with their shafts, spears, swords and darts, caused Hari to hold His breath, like unto the Twice-born when practising Pranayama.[1]

" Like an ocean where fishes play, that invincible God, under the countless blows of those rangers of the night, drew His bow and loosed His shafts on them; then Vishnu with extreme force, like unto lightning, swift as thought, riddled them with His penetrating weapons and spears by hundreds and thousands. Having dispersed them under a load of arrows as the wind a downpour, the Supreme Purusha blew His great Conch Panchajaya, and that king of conches, born of the waters, into which Hari blew with all His strength, re-echoed in such fearful wise that it shook the Three Worlds as it were. The sound of that king of conches struck terror into the Rakshasas, as the King of Beasts in the forest terrorizes the elephants intoxicated with ichor. At the sound of the conch, the horses were no longer able to stand erect, the frenzy of the elephants was subdued, whilst the warriors fell from their cars bereft of strength.

" Loosed from His bow, Vishnu's arrows, possessed of plumed

[1] The science of breath control.

hafts, having rent the Rakshasas, penetrated into the earth. Pierced by those darts, which the hand of Narayana loosed in the fight, the Rakshasas fell on the earth like crags struck by lightning, their powerful limbs torn by Vishnu's discus, the blood flowing in torrents, as from mountains secreting gold. The sound of that king of conches, the twanging of the bow-string and the voice of Vishnu stifled the cries of the Rakshasas.

"Then Hari severed their trembling necks, their darts, banners, bows, chariots, pennants and quivers. As the rays fall from the sun, as masses of water spout forth from the sea, as mighty tuskers rush down the mountain side, as torrents of rain fall from a cloud, so did the darts and arrows discharged by Narayana from His bow, fall in hundreds and thousands. As a lion before a Sharabha, as an elephant before a lion, as a tiger before an elephant, as a panther before a tiger, as a dog before a panther, as a cat before a dog, as a snake before a cat, as mice before a snake, so did the Rakshasas flee before the mighty Vishnu. Some escaped, others fell in their flight and the rest lay stretched on the earth. Whilst slaying his foes in their thousands, the Destroyer of Madhu filled the conch with his breath, as Indra the clouds with water.

"Put to flight by Narayana's shafts, terrified by the sound of the conch, the army of the Rakshasas, their ranks broken, fled in the direction of Lanka.

"Seeing his troops routed, decimated by Narayana's arrows, Sumali covered Hari with a hail of darts on the battlefield, as the fog obscures the sun, whereupon the valiant Rakshasas plucked up courage. Then Sumali, proud of his strength, rallying his forces, hurled himself forward with a great shout. Shaking his earrings as an elephant his trunk, that night-ranger, in his joy, raised a great clamour like unto a cloud pierced by lightning and, while Sumali cried out thus, Hari cut off the head of his charioteer with its dazzling earrings, and the steeds of that Rakshasa swerved, bearing away Sumali, the leader of the Titans, as those other steeds, the senses, when uncontrolled, bear away man's judgment.

"Thereafter while Sumali was being borne away by the horses of his chariot, Mali, alert, armed with his bow, rushed on the mighty Vishnu who, on his vehicle, had thrown himself into the

fray; and he let fly his arrows decorated with gold from his bow, which fell on Hari piercing him, as birds penetrate into the Krauncha Mountain. Assailed by the shafts, which Mali loosed in their thousands in the fight, Vishnu remained as undisturbed as one in full control of his senses in the face of adversity.

"Twanging His bow-string, Bhagawat, the Author of all beings, still bearing his sword and mace, discharged a hail of arrows on Mali, like unto thunder and lightning, penetrating his body, and those shafts drank his blood as serpents a pleasing draught.

"In the confusion into which he had thrown Mali, the God who bears the conch, discus and mace, struck off his diadem and brought down his banner, his bow and his steeds. Deprived of his chariot, that most powerful ranger of the night seized hold of his mace and, with this weapon in his hand, like a lion from a mountain height, hurled himself on the King of the Birds[1] as Antaka on Ishana, striking him on the forehead, as Indra strikes a mountain with his thunderbolt.

"On receiving that violent blow dealt by Mali, Garuda, distracted with pain, carried the God away from the fight, and Vishnu, having turned away through this act of Mali's and Garuda's, a great clamour arose from the Rakshasas shouting in triumph.

"Hearing the Rakshasas shout thus, the younger brother of Harihaya, the blessed Hari, was incensed with that King of Birds who served as his mount and, with the intention of slaying Mali, though his back was turned, He loosed His discus that was as bright as the solar orb, whose radiance illumines the heavens. Like unto Kala's wheel,[2] the discus fell on Mali's head and that terrible head of that leader of the Rakshasas, thus severed, rolled down amidst torrents of blood, as formerly that of Rahu.

"At that instant, the Gods, transported with joy, emitted roars like unto lions, crying with all their strength, 'Victory to Thee, O Lord!'

"Beholding Mali slain, Sumali and Malyavan, in burning grief, took refuge in Lanka with their forces. Meanwhile Garuda

[1] King of Birds—Garuda, Vishnu's vehicle.
[2] Kala's Wheel—The Wheel of Time consisting of days, weeks, months, years, decades, centuries and aeons.

having recovered, retraced his steps and, in fury, dispersed the Rakshasas with the blast of his wings. Their lotus faces cut with the discus, their breasts torn by the mace, their necks severed by the ploughshare, their foreheads split open by pikes, some pierced by the sword, some slain by arrows, those Rakshasas began to fall from the skies into the waters of the sea.

"Narayana, like unto a luminous cloud, with his excellent shafts loosed from His bow, as so many lightning strokes, exterminated those rangers of the night with their hair dishevelled and streaming in the wind. Their parasols broken, their rich apparel torn by the shafts, their entrails ripped open, their eyes wide with fear, those warriors, throwing away their arms, fell into a frenzy of terror. Resembling elephants attacked by a lion, those night-rangers with their mounts emitted cries whilst fleeing from that Primeval Lion,[1] who pursued them.

"Overwhelmed by a rain of darts from Hari, they threw away their weapons, and those rangers of the night resembled sombre clouds which the wind drives before it. Their heads severed by the discus, their limbs crushed with blows from the mace, cut in two by strokes of the sword, those foremost of the night-rangers, resembling sable clouds, crumbled like rocks and they stumbled and fell on the earth which they covered completely like dark mountains which have been shattered.

CHAPTER 8

The Combat between Vishnu and Malyavan

"When the army that followed him was destroyed by Padmanabha,[2] Malyavan halted in his flight, as the ocean when it reaches the shore. His eyes red with anger, his head trembling, that ranger of the night said to Padmanabha, the Supreme Purusha :–

"'O Narayana, Thou art ignorant of the ancient tradition of warriors, since Thou, as if a stranger to their caste, dost slay

[1] Primeval Lion—Referring to Vishnu's incarnation as Nrsingha, half man, half lion.

[2] Padmanabha—The Lotus-navelled One.

those who, in their terror, have retreated in the fight. That assassin who commits the sin of slaying a foe who has turned his back on him, O Chief of the Gods, does not attain heaven, as do the virtuous on leaving this world. Assuredly if Thou dost desire to enter into combat, Thou Who art armed with conch, discus and mace, here I stand! Manifest Thy prowess that I may witness it!'

"Seeing Malyavan standing motionless, like unto the mountain of that name, the younger brother of the King of the Gods, in his valour, answered the foremost of the Rakshasas, saying:—

"'I have vowed to the Gods that I will deliver them from the terror thou hast inspired, by slaying thee, I shall honour that pledge. The welfare of the Gods is dearer to me than life itself; therefore I shall destroy you all; now descend into the lowest hell!'

"Thus did the Lord of Lords speak, He Whose eyes resembled crimson lotuses and, filled with fury, the Rakshasa, with his spear, cut open his breast. Wielded by Malyavan's arm, that weapon emitting the sound of a bell, glittered in the breast of Hari like lightning athwart a cloud. Thereafter, He Who is dear to the God Who bears the Spear [2] drawing out that lance, hurled it at Malyavan and, as formerly Skanda loosed it, that weapon, flying from the hand of Govinda, rushed on the Rakshasa like unto a great meteor striking the Anjana Mountain, and it fell on his mighty chest, that was adorned with innumerable diamonds, as lightning strikes a rocky summit. That blow cut his mail asunder and his eyes were veiled but, recovering consciousness, he stood erect once more, like unto an immoveable rock. Armed with an iron club with innumerable spikes, he struck the God violently in the centre of the breast and, in his martial ardour, having wounded the younger brother of Vasava with his fist, that ranger of the night retreated a bow's length. At that moment, the cry 'Excellent, Excellent' arose in the sky.

"Thereafter the Rakshasa attacked Garuda, and Vainateya incensed, drove him off with the blast of his wings as a violent tempest disperses a heap of withered leaves.

[2] The God Who bears the Spear—The God of War, Karttikeya, also called Skanda.

" Seeing his elder brother driven back by the blast of Garuda's wings, Sumali, overcome with confusion, with his troops fled in the direction of Lanka. And thrust back by the violence of the wind produced by those wings, Malyavan also, joined by his forces, fled to Lanka covered with shame.

" O Lotus-eyed Prince, the Rakshasas having been repeatedly defeated in the battle by Hari and having lost the most valiant of their leaders, in their inability to withstand Vishnu, Who was destroying them, abandoned Lanka and went to dwell in Patala with their consorts. O Prince of the House of Raghu, those Rakshasas, renowned for their strength and who were the issue of the Salakatankata Race, remained under the leadership of Sumali. It was Thou Who didst destroy those warriors of the family of Poulastya named Sumali, Malyavan, Mali and their companions, who were all exceedingly resourceful and more powerful than Ravana. None other could have subdued the enemies of the Gods or have weeded out those thorns in the side of the Celestials, save Narayana, the God Who bears the conch, discus and mace. Thou art that Four-armed God, Narayana, eternal, invincible and immutable, Who came to exterminate the Rakshasas. Thou art the Father of all Beings, who, whenever righteousness declines and for love of those who take refuge in Thee, dost appear to wipe out evil-doers.

" O Lord of Men, I have related in detail all that concerns the origin of the Rakshasas. Learn further, O Prince of the Raghus, of the immeasurable power of Ravana and his sons.

" For a long time, Sumali wandered about the nether regions, tormented by the fear of Vishnu, whilst the mighty God of Wealth, surrounded by his sons and grandsons, sojourned in Lanka.

CHAPTER 9

The Birth of Dashagriva and his Brothers

" AFTER a time, that Rakshasa, named Sumali, emerged from the nether regions to range the world of men. With his earrings of pure gold, he, like unto a dark cloud, took with him a young girl who resembled Shri without her lotus and, as that Rakshasa

wandered about the earth, he beheld the Lord of Wealth, who in his Chariot Pushpaka was going to visit his sire. Beholding that son of Poulastya, that lord who was as radiant as a God, advancing towards him like unto fire, he, amazed, returned to Rasatala from the world of men.

"Thereafter that exceedingly intelligent Rakshasa reflected 'Which is the best way of increasing our power?' Thus did the foremost of the Rakshasas, who was like unto a dark cloud and was wearing golden earrings, reflect within himself and, having considered awhile, that extremely sagacious Rakshasa said to his daughter Kaikasi, for such was her name:—

"'My Daughter, it is time for thee to wed; thy youth is slipping away and, afraid of being refused, those who are in love with thee do not pay their suit. Striving to fulfil our duty, we seek only thine advantage. Assuredly, thou art endowed with every good attribute and resemblest Shri in person, O Dear Child! A young daughter is a source of anxiety to her father who is concerned for her honour, nor does he know whom she will wed. O Beloved Child, the mother's family, the father's family and the one into which she is received are all three involved in this anxiety. Do thou therefore seek out that blessed ascetic, the foremost of Poulastya's offspring and choose Vishravas, the descendant of Poulastya, O My Daughter. Assuredly thou wilt beget sons equal to that Lord of Wealth, who, in his splendour, rivals the sun.'

"At these words, in filial obedience, that young girl went to seek out Vishravas where he was undergoing penance. At that time, O Rama, that Twice-born, the issue of Poulastya was engaged in the Fire Sacrifice and himself appeared like unto a fourth fire. Heedless of the late hour and, in obedience to her sire, she presented herself before the ascetic and, halting there with her eyes cast down, fixed on her feet, she scratched the earth from time to time with her toe.

"Beholding that lovely girl, whose face resembled the full moon and who shone in her own radiance, that Muni of exalted lineage, enquired of her saying:—

"'O Fortunate One, whose daughter art thou? From whence dost thou come and for what reason or with what motive? Answer me truthfully, O Beautiful One?'

" Thus questioned, the young girl with joined palms, answered: ' By thine own powers, O Muni, thou must be conversant with mine intentions! Learn only, O Brahmarishi, that it is by the command of my sire that I have come, and Kaikasi is my name. The rest must be known to thee.' Thereafter the Muni, reflecting awhile, uttered these words :—

" ' I know well, O Fortunate One, what brings thee here, thou art desirous of having sons by me, thou whose gait is like unto an intoxicated elephant! But, having presented thyself at this hour,[1] hear me, O Fortunate One, thou shalt bring forth offspring of a dark aspect delighting in the companionship of doers of evil deeds. O Lady of Lovely Form, thou shalt beget Rakshasas of cruel exploits.'

" At these words, Kaikasi prostrated herself, saying :—

" ' O Blessed One who recitest the Veda, I do not desire such sons whose nature is depraved, from thee, be gracious unto me!'

" Thus besought by that youthful maiden, Vishravas, foremost among Munis, like unto the moon in the presence of Rohini, added :—

" ' O Lady of Lovely Face, the son thou shalt bring forth last will be like unto me, assuredly he will be virtuous.'

" Thus did he speak to that young girl, O Rama, and after some time she gave birth to a hideous child with the face of a demon, exceedingly dark; and he had ten necks and great teeth and resembled a heap of collyrium; his lips were of the hue of copper, he had twenty arms and a vast mouth and his hair was fiery red. At his birth, jackals and other wild beasts with flaming jaws circled from left to right. The God Parjanya let loose a rain of blood whilst clouds emitted harsh sounds; the sun ceased to shine, fierce winds blew and the unchanging ocean, Lord of the Rivers, was agitated.

" His father, who resembled the Grandsire of the World, thereupon conferred a name upon him and said :— ' This child with ten necks shall be called Dashagriva.'

" After him the mighty Kumbhakarna was born, that giant who was unequalled on earth, and a daughter of hideous aspect, named Shurpanakha, while Kaikasi's last child was named Bibishana.

[1] That is at dusk, interrupting the Evening Devotions, which was inauspicious.

" When this great being was born, a rain of flowers fell and, in the heavens, celestial gongs resounded whilst an aerial voice cried, ' Excellent ", " Excellent '.

" Thereafter Kumbhakarna and Dashagriva throve in that vast forest and each was exceedingly powerful and they were scourgers of the worlds. The insensate Kumbhakarna ranged the Three Worlds devouring the great Rishis who were fixed in their duty, and yet he remained unsatisfied.

" As for the virtuous Bibishana, ever vowed to righteousness, the study of the Veda being his chief nourishment, he lived as the subduer of his senses.

" After a time Vaishravana, the Lord of Wealth, went to visit his sire in his Chariot Pushpaka and, seeing him flaming with effulgence, the Rakshasi sought out Dashagriva and said to him :—

" ' My Son, behold Vaishravana, thy brother, blazing with glory and behold thy state, who art of the same family, O Dashagriva. Thou who art of immeasurable might, strive to be like Vaishravana himself.'

" Hearing his mother's words, the arrogant Dashagriva experienced a wave of overpowering bitterness, whereupon he formulated this vow.

" ' I swear to thee in truth that I shall become my brother's equal if not his superior in power ; banish any fears that may have entered thine heart ! '

" Thereafter, in his spleen, Dashagriva, accompanied by his younger brother,[1] began to undertake an exceedingly difficult task, undergoing a rigid penance.

(He thought) ' I shall accomplish mine end by asceticism ' and having thus resolved, he went to the lovely hermitage of Gokarna in order to purify his soul. There that Rakshasa with his younger brother performed unsurpassed austerities. Such were his mortifications that he gratified the Lord, the Grandsire of the World, who, in his satisfaction, granted him those boons that would assure him of victory. "

[1] Kumbhakarna.

CHAPTER 10

Concerning the Penances practised by Dashagriva and his Brother

THEN Rama enquired of the Muni :—" How did those highly powerful brothers practice penance, O Brahmana, and of what nature was it ? "

Then Agastya of tranquil mind answered Rama and said :—

" Various were the pious observances of each of them; Kumbhakarna too, putting forth all his strength, constantly pursued the path of duty. In the heat of summer he stood amidst five fires and, in the rainy season, he took up the Vira posture,[1] whilst in the winter season he remained plunged in water.

" Thus two thousand years passed during which he applied himself to piety and remained on the righteous path.

" On his side, Bibishana, who was virtue itself, intent on duty and of pure soul, stood on one leg for five thousand years. This penance accomplished, troops of Apsaras danced and a rain of flowers fell, whilst the Gods hymned his praises. During another five thousand years, he stood facing the sun, his head and arms raised, his mind fixed in contemplation of the Veda. In this wise, Bibishana, like an inhabitant of heaven in the Nandana Gardens, dwelt for ten thousand years. And Dashagriva deprived himself of nourishment for the same period and every thousand years sacrificed one of his heads to the God of Fire. Thus nine thousand years passed and nine of his heads had been sacrificed to Fire; when ten thousand years had gone by, Dashagriva prepared to sever his tenth head when the Grandsire of the World appeared, and He, with the Gods, highly gratified, presented Himself before Ravana and said to him :—

" ' I am pleased with thee, what boon shall I confer on thee this day ? Thou shalt not have undergone these austerities in vain. O Thou who art conversant with dharma, speedily choose what boon will most please thee ; thou hast found favour with me, O Dashagriva ! '

[1] Vira posture—The posture which is favourable to the regulation of breath.

" Thereupon Dashagriva, delighted, bowing down to that God, answered in a voice trembling with joy :—

" ' O Bhagawat, for living beings there exists no fear like that of death ; there is no foe comparable to Mrityu, therefore I choose immortality ! '

" Thus spoke Dashagriva and Brahma answered him saying :-

" ' It is not possible to grant thee immortality, choose some other boon ! '

" At these words of Brahma, the Creator of the World, O Rama, Dashagriva replied with joined palms :—

" ' May I not be slain by Suparnas, Nagas, Yakshas, Daityas Danavas, Rakshasas nor by the Gods, O Eternal One, O Lord of Beings. I do not fear other creatures, who, with men, I look upon as mere straws, O Thou who art adored by the Celestials.'

" Thus spoke the Rakshasa Dasaratha, and the Lord, the Grandsire of the Worlds, who was accompanied by the Gods, said to him :—

" ' It shall be as thou desirest, O Foremost of the Rakshasas ! ' Then, having answered Dashagriva thus, O Rama, the Grandsire added :—

" ' Hear what great favour I shall grant thee further in my satisfaction. The heads that formerly were sacrificed by thee into the fire, O Irreproachable One, will now grow again as they were before and, O Rakshasa, I will finally confer another boon on thee that is hard to obtain, O My Friend, thou shalt be able to assume any form thou desirest at will.'

" As soon as the Grandsire had spoken thus, the heads of the Rakshasa Dashagriva, that had been consumed by fire, grew again.

" O Rama, having spoken thus to Dashagriva, the Grandsire of the Worlds said to Bibishana :—" ' O My Dear Bibishana, thou whose intellect is fixed on virtue, I am gratified with thee, choose a boon, O Righteous and Pious One.'

" Then the pure-souled Bibishana, who radiated good qualities as the moon her beams, spoke with joined palms, saying :—

" ' O Bhagawat, I have endeavoured to do that which I ought to do. Thou art the Guru of the World ; if, in thy satisfaction, thou dost accord me a boon, then hear me, O Blessed Lord. May my soul ever be fixed in righteousness in the midst of the

greatest adversity. Without being instructed, may I be able to use the Brahma Weapon. May whatever thoughts come to me, wherever or in whatever state I find myself, always conform to virtue and may I fulfil my duty! O Most Exalted of Beings, these are the boons I consider to be the most precious; for those who follow dharma nothing is impossible!'

"Then Prajapati, full of joy, again addressed Bibishana saying:–

"'O Most Virtuous and Dear Child, let it be as thou sayest, though thou wast born in the Rakshasa Race, O Slayer of Thy Foes, no evil ever enters thy heart! I grant thee immortality!'

"Having uttered these words, as Prajapati was preparing to accord a boon to Kumbhakarna, all the Gods, with joined palms, addressed him thus:—

"'As for Kumbhakarna, do not grant him any boons! Thou knowest well how the Three Worlds fear this perverse wretch! In the Nandana Gardens, seven Apsaras and ten servants of Mahendra were devoured by him, O Brahma, as also Rishis and men. Such are the deeds of this Rakshasa before receiving a boon; if one is conferred on him, he may consume the Three Worlds! O Thou whose splendour is immeasurable, feigning to grant him a boon cause him to become bemused; in this way, the worlds will live in peace and he will receive his just deserts.'

"Thus did the Gods speak, and Brahma, born of the lotus, thought on the Goddess, his consort, and, as soon as he called her to mind, Saraswati appeared at his side and, with joined palms said to him:—

"'O Lord, I am here, what shall I do?'

"Then Prajapati answered that Goddess, who had come there, saying:—

"'O Thou who art Speech, be thou in the mouth of that Indra among the Rakshasas and utter that which the Gods desire.'

"'So be it!'" she answered and, having entered his mouth, Kumbhakarna said:—

"'To sleep for innumerable years, O Lord of Lords, this is my desire!'

"'May it be so!'" answered Brahma and, with the Gods, he departed.

"The Goddess Saraswati then left the Rakshasa, while Brahma, with the Gods ascended to the heavenly region.

"When Saraswati had departed, Kumbhakarna came to himself and that perverse wretch, in his misfortune, reflected :—

" 'How can such words have passed my lips? I must have been bemused by the Gods who came hither.'

" Having received those various boons, the three brothers of flaming energy, returned to the Sleshmataka Forest where they dwelt happily.

CHAPTER II

Dhanada cedes Lanka to Dashagriva

" SUMALI, having learnt of the boons that the rangers of the night had received, abandoning his fear, emerged from the nether regions, and the companions of that Rakshasa, Maricha, Prahasta, Virupaksha and Mahodara rushed out also full of fury.

" Thereafter Sumali with his friends, surrounded by the foremost of the Rakshasas, sought out Dashagriva and, embracing him, said :—

" 'By the grace of heaven, O Dear Child, the desire of my heart has been fulfilled since thou hast received these excellent boons from the Lord of the Three Worlds. The great fear that forced us to abandon Lanka in order to take refuge in Rasatala, into which we were precipitated by Vishnu, has now been dissipated! Many and many a time, under the threat of that terror, we abandoned our retreat but, being pursued, together we plunged into hell. Thy brother, that crafty Lord of Wealth, took possession of the City of Lanka, the abode of the Rakshasas. If it be possible by conciliation, gifts or force, to regain the possession of it, then do so, O Irreproachable Hero! Thou wilt then become the sovereign of Lanka and, by thy grace, the Rakshasa Race, that has been disestablished, will be reinstated; thereafter thou wilt reign over us all, O Lord.'

" Then Dashagriva answered his maternal grandfather who stood near and said :—

"'The Lord of Wealth is mine elder brother; it is not fitting that thou shouldst speak thus.'

"Quietly rebuked in this wise by that Indra of the Rakshasas, the most powerful of them all, Sumali, being aware of his intentions, did not insist further.

"Some time later, as Ravana continued to reside in that place, Prahasta addressed these significant words to him:—

"'O Valiant Dashagriva, such a speech is not worthy of thee; brotherly love is not the concern of heroes! Hear me! There were two sisters who loved each other and who were supremely fair; they were wedded to that Lord of Creatures, the Prajapati Kashyapa, and with him Aditi begot the Gods, those Lords of the Three Worlds, whilst Diti begot the Daityas. To the Daityas, those virtuous heroes, the earth, with its mountains, surrounded by the ocean, formerly belonged. They waxed exceedingly strong, nevertheless they were slain in war by the mighty Vishnu, who gave over the imperishable Triple World to the Gods. Thou art therefore not the only one to act in opposition to a brother, which was done by the Gods and Asuras. Follow my counsel therefore!'

"Dashagriva, hearing these words was filled with joy and, having reflected a moment, he said, 'It is well!' and, in his delight, that same day the valiant Dashagriva with his rangers of the night repaired to the wood bordering on Lanka. Stationed on the Trikuta Mountain, that ranger of the night sent out Prahasta, who was skilled in speech, as his ambassador, and said to him:—

"'Go speedily, O Prahasta, and speak to the foremost of the Nairritas, addressing him in conciliatory words, saying:—

"'This City of Lanka, O King, belongs to the magnanimous Rakshasas! O My Friend, thou didst take possession of it; it is not just, O Thou who art beyond reproach! If thou dost restore it to us now, O Hero of unrivalled exploits, I shall be gratified and justice will have been maintained.'

"Then Prahasta repaired to the City of Lanka, whose strong support was Dhanada, and addressed that Lord of Wealth of illustrious lineage in the following words:—

"'I have been deputed by thy brother Dashagriva, who is near at hand, that long-armed hero who is pious and the foremost of

warriors, to come hither and my words are those of Dashanana, O Lord of Wealth!

" ' This ravishing city, O Large-eyed Hero, was formerly held by the Rakshasas of terrible exploits, whose chief was Sumali. It is on this account, dear son of Vishravas, that Dashagriva asks thee to restore it to them; this request is made in all friendliness.'

" Having heard Prahasta, Vaishravana replied in words worthy of one who is skilled in speech and said :—

" ' Lanka was bestowed on me by my sire when it had been abandoned by the rangers of the night; I have peopled it by inducements of gifts, honours and every kind of privilege. Now go and bring this answer to Dashagriva—" The city and the kingdom under my dominion are thine also, O Long-armed Hero, enjoy this realm without restriction; share this dominion and its riches with me without division." '

" Having spoken thus, that Lord of Wealth went to visit his sire and paying obeisance to him related the nature of Ravana's request, saying :—

" ' O My Father, Dashagriva has sent a messenger to me, saying, " Give up the City of Lanka that was formerly occupied by the Rakshasa Race." What shall I do now, O Blessed One, tell me? '

" On this enquiry, the Brahmarishi Vishravas, foremost of the ascetics, said to Dhanada who stood before him with joined palms :—

" ' Hear me, O My Son, the long-armed Dashagriva has spoken of this matter in my presence and I have often rebuked him; he is exceedingly wicked and, in my wrath, I said to him " Thou wilt be destroyed; it were better for thee to listen to my words which are fraught with reason and integrity ". He is perverse however, and the boons he has received have so intoxicated him that he can no longer discriminate between what is just and unjust. It is on account of my curse that he has fallen into this lamentable condition. Do thou therefore retire to Mount Kailasha, that support of the earth, O Long-armed Hero, and leave Lanka with thy followers at once. In that place the enchanting Mandakini, the most excellent of rivers flows, whose waters are covered with golden lotuses radiant as the sun, and

Kumuda, Utpala and other varieties of water-lilies of sweet fragrance. Devas, Gandharvas, Apsaras, Uragas and Kinneras sojourn there, constantly disporting themselves. It is not fitting, O Dhanada, that thou shouldst enter into combat with that Rakshasa, for thou art conversant with the special boons he has received.'

" Hearing this reply and obedient to the counsel of his venerable sire, Dhanada left Lanka with his consort, his sons, his ministers, his vehicles and his wealth.

" Meantime Prahasta had sought out the mighty Dashagriva and, with a joyous heart, said to him in the midst of his counsellors :—

" 'The City of Lanka is now free, Dhanada has abandoned it and has departed. Do thou establish thyself therein so that, with us, thou canst fulfil thy duty.'

" Thus did Prahasta speak, and the all-powerful Dashagriva invaded Lanka with his brothers, his army and his court. As the Gods enter heaven, so did that enemy of the Celestials enter that city that Dhanada had just deserted and which was divided by well-planned highways. Enthroned by the rangers of the night, Dashanana installed himself in that city, which was filled with Rakshasas resembling dark clouds.

" The Lord of Wealth, however, in reverence for his father's words, built a city on Mount Kailasha which was immaculate as the moon, adorned with splendid palaces sumptuously decorated, as Purandara constructed Amaravati.

CHAPTER 12

The Marriages of the Rakshasas

" THE foremost of the Rakshasas, having been anointed king, with his brother began to consider giving his sister in marriage. He therefore gave that Rakshasi to the King of the Kalakas and the Lord of the Danavas himself presented Shurpanakha, his sister, to Vidyujjihva.

" This being accomplished, that night-ranger left for the chase and thereafter he beheld the son of Diti, Maya, O Rama. Seeing

him accompanied by a young girl, that Rakshasa, Dashagriva said to him :—

"' Who art thou wandering in the forest that is devoid of man or beast ? How is it that thou art in the company of this youthful maiden whose eyes resemble a doe's ? ' "

"O Rama, to this question, put to him by that ranger of the night, Maya replied, saying :—

"' Hear me and I will tell thee the truth ! There was a nymph named Hema of whom thou hast already heard. The Gods bestowed her on me, as Pauloma was given to Shatakratu. Full of love for her, I passed centuries at her side when she was taken from me by the Gods. Thirteen years passed and in the fourteenth, I built a golden city which I decorated with diamonds and emeralds by the aid of my magic powers. There I dwelt, deprived of Hema, sad, dejected and extremely wretched. Thereafter, taking my daughter with me, I left that city in order to retire to the forest. This is my child, O King, who was brought up in Hema's lap and here I am seeking a husband for her. A daughter is a great calamity, at least for all those who have regard to her honour. In truth, she is a source of anxiety to the family of her father and that of her mother.

"' Two sons were also born to me by my wife ; the first was Mayavi, O Dear Friend, and Dundubhi followed immediately. I have told thee the whole truth in accordance with thy wish ! And now, My Dear Son, I would know something of thee, who art thou ? '

" At these words the Rakshasa answered respectfully :—

"' I am of Poulastya's race and my name is Dashagriva, my father was the Sage Vishravas, who was the third son of Brahma.' "

" On hearing these words of that Indra among the Rakshasas, O Rama, indicating that he was the son of a great Sage, Maya, the foremost of the Danavas wished to give his daughter to him. Taking her hand in his, Maya addressed that King of the Rakshasas, saying :—

"' O King, this child, whose mother was the nymph Hema, the youthful Mandodari, for such is her name, do thou accept as thy consort.'

"' Let it be so ! ' answered Dashagriva, whereupon igniting a fire there, he took her hand in his, O Rama. Maya was

conversant with the curse that Dashagriva's sire, that treasury of asceticism had pronounced, nevertheless he bestowed his daughter in marriage on him, knowing him to be the offspring of the Grandsire of the World. At the same time, he gave him a marvellous spear which he had obtained through his supreme penances. It was with this weapon that Ravana wounded Lakshmana. Then, having brought about this marriage, the Lord of Lanka returned to that city.

" There, with their consent, he chose two wives for his two brothers; the daughter of Virochana, named Vajravala, was given by him to Kumbhakarna, and Bibishana received as wife the virtuous Sarama, the daughter of the King of the Gandharvas, the magnanimous Shailusha, and she had been born on the shores of the Lake Manasa.

" At that time in the rainy season, the waters of the Manasa Lake were swollen and the mother of the girl cried out affectionately, 'Do not overflow, O Lake![1]' Thereafter the girl was called Sarama.[2]

" These alliances having been concluded, the Rakshasas gave themselves up to pleasure, each with his own consort, as the Gandharvas in the Nandana Gardens.

" And Mandodari gave birth to a child with the voice of a thunder-cloud, he who is known to thee as Indrajita. Scarcely had he been born than that son of Ravana began to roar with a terrible voice, like unto thunder, and the city was deafened, O Raghava. His father therefore called him Meghanada;[3] and he grew up in the magnificent private apartments, hidden in the lap of the foremost of women, as a fire is concealed under shavings; and that son of Ravana filled his mother and father with joy.

[1] Saranariddhata—O Lake (Saro), do not overflow'
[2] Sarama—The wife of Bibishana who befriended Sita when in captivity.
[3] Meghanada—The name means 'The roar of a thunder-cloud'.

CHAPTER 13

Ravana's Crimes

"Some time later, the Lord of the Worlds sent Nidra[1] to Kumbhakarna in the form of overpowering sleep and Kumbhakarna said to his brother, who was present:—

"'O King, sleep holds me in thrall, prepare a refuge for me.'

"Therefore the king selected some artisans, like unto Vishvakarma, who constructed a splendid dwelling for Kumbhakarna, a league in expanse and two in length which was exceedingly sumptuous and secluded. On every side, it was decorated with columns of crystal encrusted with gold; the stairways were made of emerald with rows of small bells hanging from the carved ivory galleries, the floors being of diamond and crystal.

"All should have been constantly and wholly happy in that place, which was enchanting and luxurious in every way, and which was built by the Rakshasas and resembled a sacred cave in the Meru Mountain. It was there, overcome by slumber, that the mighty Kumbhakarna rested innumerable years without waking.

"Whilst his brother, the mighty Kumbhakarna, overcome by Nidra, slept for thousands of years without waking, Dashanana, of unbridled passions, harassed the Devas, Rishis, Yakshas and Gandharvas and overran their beautiful parks and groves like a madman, laying them waste; and that Rakshasa churned up the rivers, like an elephant disporting itself, agitating the trees like a violent tempest and striking the hills as if by lightning.

"Hearing of Dashagriva's exploits, the virtuous Lord of Wealth, reflecting that he was his own brother, for the honour of his race and desirous of manifesting fraternal affection, sent a messenger to Lanka in Dashagriva's interests.

"Then the messenger, entering the city, approached Bibishana

[1] Nidra—The Personification of Sleep.

who received him with honour and enquired concerning his visit. After asking about the welfare of Dhanada and his kinsfolk, Bibishana brought him to Dashanana in the assembly hall where he was resting.

" Beholding the king blazing in his own effulgence, the messenger said :—' Hail to thee, O King ' and having paid obeisance with these words, stood silent awhile. At that time Dashagriva was reclining on a sumptuous couch adorned with rich coverings whereupon the messenger addressed him saying :—

"' O King, I bring thee the words uttered by thy brother in their entirety—' Between us two, equality of conduct should exist as among others of our race. A truce to these evil deeds ! From now on comport thyself in a seemly manner and, if possible, take righteousness as thy guide ! I have seen the Nandana Gardens laid waste and, it is said, that the Rishis have been persecuted ; the measures that the Gods are taking against thee are known to me. I have been disregarded by thee on countless occasions, but even if a youthful person err, he should be protected by his relatives.

" ' Having repaired to the Himavat Plateau to practice dharma and subjugate my senses, I forced myself to undergo penance in order to gratify the Lord Mahadeva ; there I beheld that divine God accompanied by Uma and a glance from my left eye fell on the Goddess ! " Who is this woman ? " I asked myself, desiring this knowledge and for no other reason, for Rudrani had assumed an unparalleled form. Then the Goddess, by her celestial power, consumed my left eye, which grew yellow and the light became obscured as if by dust.

" ' Thereupon I repaired to another vast mountain plateau and remained there eight hundred years observing silence. Having completed that penance, the God Maheshwara came to me and, highly gratified, said :—

"' " I am satisfied with thine austerities O Virtuous and Saintly Ascetic. This vow has been fulfilled by me and by thee, O Lord of Rishis ; none other could have observed a similar mortification. These practices are extremely rigid and I myself formerly followed them also. Grant me thy friendship therefore, O Sinless One, thou hast conquered me and thy penance has been fruitful. As the Goddess, whose form thou didst look upon,

burnt up thy left eye, turning it yellow, thou shalt be named Ekakshipingali.[1] "

" ' Having thus contracted a friendship with Shankara, I took leave of him and, on my return, learnt of thine evil conduct. Abandon this impious course that will bring dishonour on our race. The Gods with the hosts of Rishis are considering how they may destroy thee.'

" Hearing these words, Dashagriva, his eyes red with anger, clenching his fists and teeth, answered him thus :—

" ' O Messenger, I knew what thou wast about to utter! Neither art thou my brother nor is he who sent thee; for the Lord of Wealth is not speaking in mine interests! That fool forces me to hear of his friendship with Maheshwara! This speech of thine is intolerable. I have borne it till now, for he is mine elder brother and, as such, it is not fitting that I should slay him. Now, hearing thine address, this is my resolve—' By the strength of mine arms, I shall conquer the Three Worlds. Solely on his account, I shall dispatch the Four Guardians of the World to the region of Yama ! '

" Having spoken thus, the Lord of Lanka, Ravana, slew the messenger with a single stroke of his sword and gave him to the wicked Rakshasas to devour. Thereafter, ascending his chariot amidst acclamations, in his eagerness to subdue the Three Worlds, he set out to seek the Lord of Wealth.

CHAPTER 14

The Combat between Ravana and the Yakshas

"RAVANA, proud of his strength, surrounded by his six ministers, Mahodara, Prahasta, Maricha, Shuka, Sarana and Dhumraksha, those heroes, who dreamt only of war, departed, as if in his fury he would consume the worlds.

" Then he traversed cities, rivers, mountains, forests and woods and soon came to Mount Kailasha. Hearing that the Lord of the Rakshasas, eager to fight, full of insolence and wickedness

[1] Ekakshipingali—Yellow-eyed.

accompanied by his counsellors, had established himself on the mountain, the Yakshas dared not remain there for fear of him. Then they said to each other, 'This is the brother of our King' and, knowing this, they approached Dhaneshwara and, coming into his presence, they imparted his brother's intentions to him. Thereupon, with Dhanada's permission, they set out joyfully in order to give battle.

"The impact of those valiant troops of the King of the Nairritas was as violent as the sea; and the mountains seemed to be riven asunder, whilst a furious struggle ensued amongst the followers of the Rakshasas and, seeing his army thrown into disorder, Dashagriva, the ranger of the night, after many encouraging shouts, flew into a rage. Then the companions of the King of the Rakshasas of redoubtable valour, each took on a thousand Yakshas. Smitten with blows from maces, iron bars, swords, picks and darts, Dushana, scarcely able to breathe, was overwhelmed by a rain of weapons which fell thick and fast like hail from the clouds. Nevertheless he remained unmoved under the shafts of the Yakshas, as a mountain that the clouds flood with innumerable showers.

"Thereafter, that hero, brandishing his mace like unto Kala's sceptre, flung himself on the Yakshas whom he hurled into Yama's abode. Like unto fire, flaming up on account of the wind, consuming a heap of grass or dried faggots which are scattered about, so did he destroy the army of the Yakshas.

"And his ministers, Mahodara, Shuka and the others, only suffered a few of the Yakshas to escape, who resembled clouds dispersed by the wind. Overwhelmed with blows and broken, they fell in the fight, filled with fury, biting their lips with their sharp teeth. And some of the Yakshas, exhausted, clung to each other, their weapons broken, and sank down on the battlefield as dykes give way before a surge of waters. With those who were slain ascending to heaven, those who fought rushing hither and thither and the companies of Rishis witnessing the scene, there was not a single space left anywhere.

"Beholding the foremost of the Yakshas scattered despite their valour, the mighty Lord of Wealth despatched other Yakshas and, at his call, O Rama, a Yaksha named Samyodhakantaka instantly rushed out at the head of a large force. Struck by him

in the fight, as by a second Vishnu with his discus, Maricha fell to the earth like a star falling from the heights of Mount Kailasha, ts merits exhausted.

"Thereafter, that Ranger of the Night, regaining consciousness, gathered up his strength in a moment and entered into combat with the Yaksha, who having been defeated, fled. Meantime Dashagriva, his limbs loaded with ornaments of gold, silver and emerald, advanced to the very portals of the outer defences and, seeing that Ranger of the Night enter, the doorkeeper sought to prevent him; but the Rakshasa forced his way in, whereupon the Yaksha seized hold of him. Seeing himself checked, O Rama, he was not discouraged and began to break down the door, whilst the Yaksha, overwhelmed by his blows, streaming with blood, looked like a mountain from which minerals are pouring.

"Though struck by the Yaksha with the door-post, that hero was not slain on account of the rare gifts received from Swyambhu, and in his turn, arming himself with the same post, he struck the Yaksha who, his body reduced to dust, disappeared, leaving no trace.

"Thereupon, witnessing the strength of the Rakshasas, a general stampede took place among the Yakshas, who, mad with terror, sought refuge in the rivers and the caves, throwing away their arms, exhausted, their features distorted.

CHAPTER 15

The Combat between Ravana and Dhanada. Ravana seizes Pushpaka

"SEEING the foremost of the Yakshas fleeing in their thousands, the Lord of Wealth said to the powerful Manibhadra :—

"'O Prince of the Yakshas, slay that wicked Ravana of evil ways and deliver the valiant and heroic Yakshas!'

"At this command, the long-armed and invincible Manibhadra set out to fight surrounded by four thousand Yakshas and they hurled themselves on the Rakshasas, whom they struck with

blows from maces, bars, javelins, lances, swords and clubs. And they entered into a violent struggle, falling on the foe with the swiftness of birds of prey, crying 'Advance! Advance!' 'Yield!' 'Never!' 'Fight!'

"Beholding that formidable combat, the Devas, Gandharvas, Rishis and Chanters of the Veda were extremely astonished. A thousand of the Yakshas fell under Prahasta's blows in the conflict and that irreproachable Hero Mahodara slew a further thousand, whilst, in his fury, O Prince, Maricha, thirsting to fight, slew two thousand of the enemy in the twinkling of an eye.

"On their side, the Yakshas fought valiantly but the Rakshasas called upon their powers of magic and thus gained ascendancy in the combat, O Lion among Men. While wrestling with Dhumraksha in the great struggle, Manibhadra received a violent blow in the chest from a pike but remained unmoved, and he, in his turn, struck the Titan Dhumraksha on the head whereupon he fell senseless.

"Seeing Dhumraksha wounded and covered with blood, Dashanana hurled himself on Manibhadra in the thick of the fray and, while he was rushing on him in fury, the foremost of the Yakshas, Manibhadra, pierced him with three darts. Wounded, Dashagriva struck a blow at Manibhadra's diadem which fell to one side and, from that day, he was known as 'Parshvamauli'.[1]

"Manibhadra, having been put to flight despite his valour, a great clamour arose on the mountain, O King. From afar, the Lord of Wealth, who was armed with a mace and surrounded by Shukra, Prausthapada, Padma and Shakha, beheld Ravana, and, seeing his brother in the field, having lost all dignity, deprived of his glory on account of the curse, the sagacious Kuvera addressed him in words worthy of the House of his Grandsire, saying:—

"'As despite my warning, thou dost not desist, O Perverse Wretch, thou shalt recognize the consequences in the future, when thou hast fallen into hell. He who through heedlessness drinks poison and when he realises it, in his delusion, does not refrain, will know the results of his act in its effects. The Gods do not necessarily approve even dharmic actions, how much

[1] Parshvamauli—'One whose diadem is awry'.

less those that bring about such a condition as thine; it is because of this that thou art reduced to this state and thou dost not appear to be aware of it. He who does not honour his mother, father, a brahmin or a preceptor, will reap the fruit of his fault when he falls under the sway of the Lord of Death. That fool who does not mortify his body will suffer hereafter, when after death he enters the region that his deeds have merited. No wicked man sees his designs fulfilled as he would have wished; as he sows so shall he reap. In this world, prosperity, beauty, power, sons, wealth and prowess are all attained by pious acts. Given over to such iniquitous deeds, thou wilt go to hell. I will not parley with thee further; thus should one act in respect of evil-doers!'

"At these words of Dhanada, which were addressed to Ravana's counsellors led by Maricha, they being struck, turned and fled. Dashagriva, however, who had received a blow on the head from the mace of that powerful Lord of the Yakshas, did not move. Thereafter Yaksha and Rakshasa entered into a fierce and prolonged duel, experiencing no fatigue, and Dhanada loosed the Fire-weapon on the Lord of the Titans, who parried it with the Varuna weapon. Then Ravana, having recourse to magic, natural to a Rakshasa, transformed himself in a thousand ways in order to slay his adversary, and that Ten-necked One assumed the form of a tiger, a boar, a cloud, a mountain, an ocean, a tree, a Yaksha and a Daitya. Thus, though wearing many forms, his own remained hidden. Thereafter seizing hold of a mighty weapon, Dashagriva, whirling it round, brought that enormous mace down on the head of Dhanada and the blow knocked the Lord of Wealth senseless, who fell covered with blood, like unto an Ashoka Tree whose roots have been severed.

"Then Padma and other Rishis surrounded Dhanada and bore him through the sky to the Nandana Wood.

"Having vanquished Dhanada, the foremost of the Rakshasas, with a joyful heart, as a sign of victory, seized the Chariot Pushpaka, that was furnished with golden pillars and doors of emerald, hung with strings of pearls and planted with trees bearing fruit in all seasons; swift as thought, it ranged everywhere at will in its aerial flight. Possessed of golden stairways, encrusted with gems and with floors of refined gold, that

indestructible vehicle of the Gods, a perpetual joy to the eyes and heart, that masterpiece created by Vishvakarma at Brahma's command, with its countless ornaments, was indeed a marvel. All that could be desired was to be found therein and it was of a magnificence nothing could surpass; neither too hot nor too cold, it was pleasantly temperate at all seasons.

" Ascending that chariot, which he had acquired by his prowess, coursing wheresoever he would, the King Ravana, in his pride and wickedness, deemed himself to have overcome the Three Worlds. Having conquered Vaishravana, he descended from Mount Kailasha and, having by his prowess obtained this great victory, that Ranger of the Night, dazzling in his diadem and necklace of flawless pearls, in his marvellous chariot, blazed like fire.

CHAPTER 16

The Origin of Ravana's Name

" O RAMA, having vanquished his brother, the supreme Lord of the Rakshasas went to the great fen where Mahasena was born; and Dashagriva beheld that vast and golden expanse of reeds sending forth shafts of light like unto a second sun. Ascending the mountain which rose in the centre of that fen, O Rama, he observed that the Chariot Pushpaka was suddenly deprived of motion.

" Thereupon that King of the Rakshasas, surrounded by his attendants, reflected :—' How is this, the chariot has halted? Why is it not still moving since it was created to follow its master's will? Wherefore does the Pushpaka Car not go wheresoever I desire? Is this not the doing of some inhabitant of the mountain'?

" Then, O Rama, the intelligent Maricha said to him :—

" ' It is not without reason, O King, that the Chariot Pushpaka moves no longer. Without doubt it is only able to serve Dhanada and, since it is separated from that Lord of Wealth, it has become motionless ! '

" As he spoke thus, a fearful yellow and black-hued dwarf appeared, who was extremely stout and possessed a shaven head

and short arms; it was Nandi. Approaching that Indra among the Rakshasas, that servant of Bhava, Nandi, fearlessly addressed him, saying :—

" ' Begone, O Dashagriva, the Lord Shankara is disporting himself on this mountain; it is forbidden to birds, serpents, Yakshas, Devas, Gandharvas and Rakshasas to come hither! '

" Hearing Nandi's words, Ravana, with his earrings trembling in his wrath, his eyes red with fury, leapt down from the Pushpaka Chariot and approaching the foot of the peak, demanded :—

" ' Who is this Shankara? '

" Then he beheld Nandi standing at the side of that God, supporting himself on his gleaming trident, blazing in his own effulgence, like unto a second Shankara.

" Beholding that monkey-faced One, the Rakshasa, in his contempt laughed derisively, roaring like a thunder-cloud. Highly provoked, the blessed Nandi, Shankara in another form, said to Dashagriva, who stood near :—

" ' Since thou hast derided me in my monkey form, O Dashanana, by bursting into loud laughter resembling thunder, monkeys, like unto myself in form, endowed with prodigious strength, shall be born to destroy thee and thy race. Armed with nails and teeth, O Barbarian, they will descend like an avalanche of rocks, and swift as thought, thirsting to fight and, proud of their strength, shall crush thy great pride and thy high prowess with that of thine adherents and thy sons. I am well able to slay thee now, O Ranger of the Night, but it is no longer necessary to put thee to death since thy previous acts have already overtaken thee.'

" Hearing these prophetic utterances of that magnanimous God, the celestial gongs resounded and a rain of flowers fell from the sky. Disregarding Nandi's words, the extremely powerful Dashanana drew nearer to the mountain and said :—

" ' As it is on thine account that the course of Pushpaka, in which I was travelling, has been arrested, I shall uproot the mountain, O Cowherd! What is the nature of the power which enables Bhava to sport here continually like a king? He is not aware of what should be known to him and that the moment for him to tremble has come.'

" Speaking thus, O Rama, he seized the mountain in his arms

and shook it violently so that the rocky mass vibrated. In consequence of the mountain quaking, the attendants of the God were troubled and Parvati herself, terrified, clung to the neck of Maheshwara.

"Then, O Rama, Mahadeva, the foremost of the Gods, as if in sport, pressed the mountain with his great toe and, at the same time, he crushed Ravana's arms, that resembled pillars of granite, to the great consternation of all the counsellors of that Rakshasa. And he, in pain and fury, suddenly let forth a terrible cry, causing the Three Worlds to tremble, so that his ministers thought it to be the crash of thunder at the dissolution of the worlds! Thereupon the Gods, with Indra at their head, stumbled on their way; the oceans became agitated, the mountains shook, and the Yakshas, Vidyadharas and Siddhas cried out :—'What is this? Do thou pacify Mahadeva, the Blue-throated One, the Lord of Uma; apart from Him, there is no refuge in the world, O Dashanana! By hymns and prostration seek refuge with Him, propitiated and gratified, Shankara will look on thee with favour.'

"Hearing the words of his ministers, Dashanana, bowing before Him, worshipped the God Whose standard bears the bull, by the recitation of hymns and innumerable sacred texts. Thus did that titan lament for a thousand years.

"Thereafter the Lord Mahadeva, propitiated, released the arms of Dashanana from under the mountain and addressed him saying :—

"'I am gratified with thy courage and endurance, O Dashanana! When thou wast imprisoned under the rock, thou didst emit a terrible cry, striking terror in the Three Worlds. For this reason, O King, from now on thy name shall be Ravana, and Celestials, Men, Yakshas and other Beings in the universe shall call thee "Ravana"—"He who causes the worlds to cry out". O Poulaṣtya,[1] follow the path that pleases thee without fear, thou hast my sanction to depart.'

"Thus spoke Shambhu to the Lord of Lanka and he, in his turn, said :—

"'O Mahadeva, if thou art satisfied, then I pray thee, grant me a boon! I am not able to be slain by Gods, Gandharvas,

[1] Mahasena—The Lord of War, Karttikeya.

Danavas, Rakshasas, Guhyakas or Nagas nor by any other great Beings, I do not take man into account deeming him to be too insignificant. I have been granted a long life by Brahma, O Destroyer of *Tripura, but I desire a further lease of life ; do thou* confer this upon me, as also a weapon.'

" Thus spoke Ravana, and Shankara bestowed an exceedingly bright sword upon him, famed as Chandrahasa.[1] Thereafter the Lord of Creatures accorded him a further lease of life and, handing him the weapon, Shambhu said :—

" ' Never treat this weapon with contempt, if thou dost disregard it, it will assuredly return to me ! '

" Having received his name from that great God Maheshwara, Ravana paid obeisance to him and re-ascended his aerial Car Pushpaka. Thereafter, O Rama, he began to range the entire world subduing the foremost of warriors, irresistible in combat and those who were filled with courage and boiling with ardour, who dreamt only of war and who perished with their troops by refusing to submit to him. But those, who knew Ravana to be invincible, showed themselves to be more wary and said to that titan, proud of his strength, ' We have been vanquished ! '

CHAPTER 17

The Story of Vedavati

"O KING, when the long-armed Ravana was ranging the earth, he came to the Himalayan Forest and began to explore it. There he beheld a young girl, radiant as a goddess, wearing a black antelope skin and matted locks, leading the life of an ascetic. Seeing the youthful and lovely girl who was given over to austere practices, he was overcome by desire and enquired of her laughingly :—

"'Why, O Blessed One, hast thou adopted a life so ill-fitted to thy years ? Assuredly such vagaries do not agree with thy beauty, O Timid Lady, a beauty that nothing surpasses, and which inspires others with desire, should not be hidden.

[1] He being a descendant of Poulastya.

" 'Whose daughter art thou, O Fortunate One? From whence springs thy way of life? Who is thy consort, O Youthful Lady of lovely looks? He with whom thou art united is fortunate indeed! *I beg of thee to tell me all; why these mortifications?'*

" Being thus questioned by Ravana, that young girl, radiant with beauty and rich in ascetic practices, having offered him the traditional hospitality, replied :—

" 'My Sire is named Kushadwaja, a Brahmarishi of immeasurable renown, the illustrious son of Brihaspati, whom he equals in wisdom. I, his daughter was born of the speech of that magnanimous One, whose constant pursuit is the study of the Veda; my name is Vedavati. At that time, the Devas, Gandharvas, Yakshas, Rakshasas and Pannagas approached my sire to ask for my hand but my father did not wish to give me in marriage to them, O King of the Rakshasas, for the reason which I shall now unfold to thee; listen attentively, O Lion among Heroes!

" ' My Sire had chosen Vishnu, Chief of the Gods, Lord of the Three Worlds Himself, to be my consort and on this account he would not permit me to wed any other. Hearing this the King of the Daityas, Shumbhu, proud of his strength, was highly provoked and, during the night, while my father slept, he was slain by that wicked one. My unfortunate mother, who till then, had been so happy, embracing my father's body, entered the fire.

" ' Now I desire to fulfil his will regarding Narayana; it is He to whom I have given my heart. With this intention I am undergoing a rigid penance. I have told thee all, O King of the Rakshasas; Narayana is my lord; I desire no other than the Supreme Purusha. For the sake of Narayana, I have undergone these severe mortifications. Thou art known to me, O King, go hence, thou the offspring of Poulastya. By the grace of mine austerities I know all that has taken place in the Three Worlds.'

" Thereupon Ravana, dismounting from his chariot, overcome by the darts of the God of Love, once more addressed that young girl of severe penances, saying :—

" ' O Lady of Lovely Hips, thou art presumptuous in harbouring such an ambition; it is to the aged that the accumulation of merit accrues, O Thou whose eyes resemble a fawn's. Thou art possessed of the beauty of the Three Worlds, O Timid Lady, but thy youth is passing away; I am the Lord of Lanka

and am called Dashagriva! Become my consort and enjoy every delight according to thy whim. Who is this whom thou callest Vishnu? In valour, asceticism, magnificence and strength, the one thou lovest cannot compare with us, O Fortunate and Youthful Lady!'

"As he spoke thus, Vedavati cried out 'For shame! For shame!' and thereafter addressed that Ranger of the Night further, saying:—

"'Who, had he any wisdom, would fail to pay homage to the Supreme Lord of the Three Worlds, Vishnu, Who is universally revered, save thou, O Indra among the Rakshasas?'

"At these words of Vedavati, that Ranger of the Night seized hold of the hair of that young girl, whereupon Vedavati, in indignation, cut off her hair with her hand which had been transformed into a sword. Burning with anger, she, as if she would consume that night-ranger, kindled a brazier and, in her eagerness to yield up her life, said to him:—

"'Soiled by thy contact, O Vile Rakshasa, I do not desire to live and shall throw myself into the fire before thine eyes. Since thou hast affronted me in the forest, O Wretch, I shall be reborn for thy destruction. It is not possible for a woman to slay an evil man and, if I curse thee, my penances will be rendered void; if, however, I have ever given anything in charity or offered any sacrifice, may I be of immaculate birth and the noble daughter of a virtuous man.'

"So speaking, she threw herself into the fire that she had ignited, and straightway a rain of flowers fell.

"Vedavati is the daughter of Janaka, her supposed father, O Strong-armed Lord, and thy consort, for thou art the eternal Vishnu. That woman, who, in anger, formerly cursed the enemy who resembled a mountain, destroyed him by appealing to thy supernatural power. Thus that goddess was reborn among men, springing up like a flame on the altar, from a field which was turned by the blade of a plough. First she was born as Vedavati in the Golden Age and subsequently, in the Silver Age, she was re-born in the family of the magnanimous Janaka in the race of Mithila, for the destruction of that Rakshasa."

CHAPTER 18

The Gods assume a thousand Forms in fear of Ravana

" VEDAVATI having entered the fire, Ravana remounted his chariot and began to range the earth once more. Having reached Ushirabija, he beheld the King Marutta performing a sacrifice in company with the Gods.

"A Brahmarishi named Samvarta, the brother of Brihaspati himself, conversant with the tradition, was assisting amidst the Celestial Host. Perceiving the Rakshasa, rendered invincible on account of the boons he had received, the Gods, fearing an outrage on his part, assumed the shape of animals.

" Indra became a peacock, Dharmaraja a crow, Kuvera a chameleon and Varuna a swan. The other Deities having escaped in a like manner, O Slayer of Thy Foes, Ravana penetrated into the place of sacrifice like an unclean dog.

"Approaching the king, Ravana, the Lord of the Rakshasas said to him :—

" ' Fight or submit ! '

" Then the monarch replied, ' Who art thou ? ' to which Ravana, with a sneering laugh, answered :—

" ' I am charmed with thy simplicity, seeing thou dost not flee before me, Ravana, the younger brother of Dhanada. In the Three Worlds can there be any other who is ignorant of my strength, I who vanquished my brother and carried off his aerial car ? '

" Then the King Marutta answered Ravana, saying :—

" ' Forsooth thou art highly fortunate that thou hast triumphed over thine elder brother in combat. None in the Three Worlds can equal thee in glory, yet unrighteous deeds can never be commended. Having committed this foul act, thou dost preen thyself on having vanquished thy brother ! What course of asceticism didst thou follow formerly that has earned thee this boon ? I have never heard aught equal to that which thou hast related to me. Halt where thou standest ; never shalt thou

approach me alive! This very hour, with my sharp arrows, I shall send thee to the abode of death!'

"Speaking thus, the king, armed with his bow and arrows, in the height of anger, rushed out, but Samvarta barred the way; then the great Rishi said to Marutta:—

"'Hear the words inspired by my attachment for thee! Thou shouldst not enter into combat. If this sacrifice in honour of Maheshwara remain uncompleted, thy race will be destroyed. How can one, who has undertaken a sacrifice, fight? How can he show anger? Further, it is doubtful that thou wilt triumph; the Rakshasa is difficult to overcome.'

"Hearing the words of his Guru, Marutta, that Lord of the Earth, throwing away his bow and arrows, grew calm and gave himself wholly to the ceremony.

"Then Shuka, deeming he had accepted defeat, proclaimed with shouts of triumph, 'Ravana is the victor!'

"Having devoured the great Rishis, who were present at the sacrifice, Ravana, gorged with their blood, began to range the earth once more. When he had departed, the Celestials with Indra at their head returned and spoke to those creatures whose forms they had borrowed.

"In his delight, Indra said to the peacock, whose tail was dark blue:—

"'I am pleased with thee, O Virtuous Bird, thou shalt have nothing to fear from serpents; thou shalt bear a thousand eyes on thy tail and shalt manifest thy joy when it rains, as a testimony of my satisfaction.'[1]

"Such was the boon conferred on the peacock by that great lord. O Monarch, the tails of peacocks, which were dark blue formerly, have become brilliantly hued on account of this boon.

"O Rama, Dharmaraja then said to the crow, who had perched on the sacrificial post:—

"'O Bird, I am gratified with thee, listen to mine auspicious words. Thou shalt not be visited by the various diseases to which all beings are subject, for thou hast gratified me, be assured thereof! Through the grace of the boon I shall confer on thee, O Bird, thou shalt have no need to fear death and shalt

[1] Indra being the 'Bringer of Rain'.

live long, till thou art slain by man. Those inhabiting my empire, who are tormented by hunger, shall be satisfied, as also their kinsfolk when thou hast fed.'

"Varuna, in his turn, said to the swan, the King of Winged Creatures, who was disporting itself in the waters of the Ganges :- " 'Thou shalt appear in a ravishing and graceful form, radiant as the lunar orb, supremely beautiful, white as pure foam. In contact with mine element,[1] thou wilt rejoice continually. Thou shalt taste a happiness that is unparalleled, which will be the mark of mine approval!'

"O Rama, formerly swans were not wholly white, their wings were dark at the tips and their breasts were the colour of emerald.

"In his turn, Kuvera addressed the chameleon who was resting on a rock and said :—

" 'I confer on thee a golden hue on account of the pleasure thou hast given me. Thy head will be of an unalterable golden colour as a mark of my favour.'

"Such were the boons conferred on those creatures after the sacrifice of the Gods, who, when the ceremony had been completed, returned with their king to their abode."

CHAPTER 19

Ravana fights with Anaranya who dies prophesying the Rakshasa's End

"HAVING triumphed over Marutta, the Lord of the Rakshasas, Dashanana, ranged the royal cities thirsty for combat and, approaching the mighty monarchs who were the equals of Mahendra and Varuna, that Lord of the Titans said to them, 'Fight or submit! Thus have I resolved, there is no escape for you!'

"Thereupon, though not faint-hearted, those sagacious monarchs, fixed in their duty, took counsel together and, despite their great strength, recognizing the superior power of their foe, O Dear Child, all those princes, Dushkanta, Suratha, Gadhi, Gaya and the King Pururava, said to him :—'We are defeated!'

[1] Literally 'My body'—water, Varuna being the Lord of Rivers.

"Then Ravana, the Lord of the Rakshasas approached Ayodhya, which was as strongly fortified by Anaranya as Amaravati by Shakra. Presenting himself before that lion among men, a king who was equal to Purandara in valour, Ravana said :—

" 'Enter into combat with us or admit defeat, such is our mandate !'

" The King of Ayodhya, Anaranya, hearing that wicked Monarch of the Rakshasas speak thus, answered indignantly :—

" 'O Lord of the Titans, I accept thy challenge, stay and make thy preparations speedily as I too shall make mine.'

" Thereafter, though already overcome by that which he had heard related and despite his great prowess, the king with his army set out, in an attempt to slay Ravana, with his elephants numbering ten thousand, his horses a million, his chariots in their thousands and his infantry, which, O Prince, covered the whole earth. And that force rushed out to fight with its infantry and cavalry and a terrific and extraordinary struggle ensued between the King Anaranya and the Lord of the Rakshasas.

" In the grip of Ravana's forces, the army of that monarch, having fought for a long time and manifested supreme courage, was entirely destroyed as a libation poured into a fire is wholly consumed. Coming in contact with those ranks projecting flames, the remaining battalions were completely annihilated like moths that enter a brazier.

" Beholding his vast army obliterated as hundreds of streams disappear in the sea in which they empty themselves, the king, transported with fury, stretching his bow, that resembled Shakra's, advanced in the height of anger towards Ravana whereupon his followers, Maricha, Shuka and Sarana, fled like deer. Then that descendant of Ikshvaku loosed eight hundred arrows on the head of the Sovereign of the Rakshasas but, as showers loosed from the clouds on the summit of a mountain, those shafts fell upon him without inflicting a single wound.

" Meantime the Lord of the Rakshasas, provoked, struck the face of Anaranya, unseating that king from his chariot so that the monarch, trembling convulsively, fell to the earth helpless, as a Sala Tree struck down in the forest by a lightning stroke. Then the Rakshasa mockingly enquired of that descendant of the Ikshvaku Race, saying :—

" 'What hast thou gained by entering into combat with me? In the Three Worlds, none can stand against me, O Chief of Men! I deem that thou art immersed in pleasure and hast not even heard of my prowess!'

"Thus spoke Ravana and the king, scarcely breathing, answered :—

" 'What can I do now? Assuredly fate is inexorable! It is not thou who hast conquered me, O Rakshasa, despite thy boastings, it is Time that has overwhelmed me; he is the true author of death! What can I do, now that I have come to the end of my days? Nay, O Rakshasa, I did not turn back in this fight with thee in which I am about to succumb but, on account of thy disregard for one of the magnanimous Ikshvakus, I tell thee this, O Rakshasa:—if I have ever given anything in charity, if I have ever undertaken a sacrifice, if I have ever practiced a rigid penance, if I have protected my subjects, may my words prove true—in the House of the magnanimous Ikshvakus will be born a warrior named Rama, the son of Dasaratha, who will extinguish thy vital breaths!'

"As this curse was being pronounced, the sound of celestial gongs could be heard and, from the cloud-covered sky, a rain of flowers fell. Thereafter the king, that Indra among Monarchs, ascended to the region of Trivishtapa, and that sovereign having entered heaven, the Rakshasa went away."

CHAPTER 20

Ravana's Meeting with the Sage Narada

"As the King of the Rakshasas was ranging the earth, sowing terror amongst its inhabitants, he beheld Narada, that foremost of Munis, riding on a cloud and, having paid obeisance to him and enquired as to his welfare, Dashagriva questioned him concerning his presence there. Then Narada, the supremely illustrious and celestial Rishi of immeasurable effulgence, stationed on the peak of a cloud, replied to Ravana who stood in the aerial Car Pushpaka, saying :—

"'O King of the Rakshasas, O My Friend, stay a moment! O Son of Vishravas, Offspring of a noble Race, I am gratified by thy valiant exploits. Vishnu, overcoming the Daityas, pleased me and thou also hast filled me with delight by harassing the Gandharvas and Uragas and exterminating them. I will tell thee something that should be known to thee if thou art willing to hear it! Pay attention to my words, My Dear Son!

"'Why destroy the world, O Dear Child, thou whom the Gods cannot slay? This world passes away and is under the power of Mrityu; it is not worthy of thee to harass the world of mortals, thou who may not be destroyed by Suras, Danavas, Daityas, Yakshas, Gandharvas and Rakshasas. Who would slay creatures who are ever bewildered in respect to their welfare and a prey to great calamities? Who would strike a world such as this which is overcome by age and disease? What wise man would enjoy making war on this world of men amidst a perennial stream of every kind of affliction that visits it on all sides? How can one torment this world which is perishable, smitten by divine forces, hunger, thirst and old age and assailed by misfortune and disappointment?

"'Sometimes, full of joy, men give themselves up to music and dancing, whilst others are crying out in distress, their faces streaming with tears that fall from their eyes. Through attachment to mother, father, children or in affection for their consorts, they rush into ills they know not, then why torment a world already brought low by nescience? Assuredly thou hast heretofore subdued the world of men, O Dear One! Thou shouldst undoubtedly descend to Yama's abode; it is Yama whom thou shouldst overcome, O Poulastya,[1] O Thou the penetrator of hostile citadels. When death is subdued, verily the whole universe is subdued.'

"Thus spoke Narada, radiant in his own effulgence, whereupon the Lord of Lanka began to laugh and paying obeisance to him, replied:—

"'O Great Rishi, thou who findest felicity in the company of the Gods and Gandharvas and who takest delight in warfare, I am resolved to descend into Rasatala for the purpose of conquest and, having triumphed over the Three Worlds and placed the

[1] Ravana is here addressed as a descendant of Poulastya.

Serpent Race and the Gods under my yoke, I shall churn up the ocean containing the Nectar of Immortality.'

"Thereafter, the blessed Rishi Narada asked Dashagriva :—

"'Why therefore dost thou remain here engaged in another path? Assuredly the way that leads to the City of Yama, the King of the Dead, is extremely hard, O Invincible Hero, O Scourge of thy Foes.'

"Thereat, bursting into laughter, like unto the crash of thunder in autumn, Dashanana cried out: —

"'Verily it is accomplished!' Then he added, 'Resolved to slay Vaivasvata, O Great Brahmin, I shall go to the southern region, where that king, born of Surya, dwells. Truly, O Most Blessed One, in mine anger and martial ardour, I swear I shall overcome the four Guardians of the World! Here am I, ready to march against the city of the King of the Pitris. I shall compass the end of Mrityu, he who plunges all beings into mourning.'

"Having spoken thus to the Muni and taken leave of him, Dashagriva went away and entered the southern region accompanied by his ministers.

"Narada however, filled with brahmanic ardour stood awhile plunged in thought and, as he pondered, that Indra among ascetics resembled a smokeless fire.

"He reflected :—'How can death be overcome, he who afflicts the Three Worlds with their rulers and all animate and inanimate beings, visiting them with just retribution at the termination of their lives? He, the witness of their offerings and sacrifices, like unto a second Pavaka; he, whose power energises the worlds when beings attaining consciousness put forth their activity, and in fear of whom the Three Worlds are disturbed. He before whom the Three Worlds flee in terror, how dare that foremost of Rakshasas stand before him? He who is Vidhatar and Dhatar, the distributor of rewards and punishments in accordance with men's deeds; he the conqueror of the Three Worlds, how can Ravana overcome him? And if he does subdue him, what other order will he establish? Curiosity urges me to descend into Yama's abode in order to witness the duel between Yama and that Rakshasa in person.'"

CHAPTER 21

Ravana goes to the Nether Regions to challenge Yama

" REFLECTING thus, the foremost of the ascetics departed with a light step for Yama's abode in order to acquaint him with what had taken place and there he found the God Yama before a fire, dealing out justice to every being according to his deserts.

" Then Yama, becoming aware of the presence of that great Rishi Narada, offering him a comfortable seat and the Arghya, according to tradition, said to him :—

" ' O Devarishi, is all well or is righteousness in jeopardy? Wherefore hast thou come hither, thou who art revered by the Gods and Gandharvas ? '

" Thereupon Narada, that blessed Rishi, answered him saying :—

" ' Hear what I have to tell thee and do what thou considerest fitting ! That ranger of the night, named Dashagriva, is coming here to overthrow thee by the force of his will, though thou art invincible. It is on this account that I have come hither in all haste, fearing what would befall thee, O Lord Who bearest the Rod.'[1]

"At that instant, they beheld the Rakshasa's chariot, bright as the sun, approaching in the distance ; and the mighty Dashagriva advancing in the dazzling Pushpaka Car dispelled the darkness of the region of death.

" On all sides that long-armed hero beheld those who were eating the fruit of their good and evil acts and he observed the soldiers of Yama and his attendants, ferocious beings of formidable and hideous aspect. He saw those undergoing torment emitting loud cries, giving themselves up to bitter lamentations, devoured by worms and fierce dogs, uttering shrieks that rent the ears, filling all with terror ; and those who were crossing the Vaitarani River, which flowed with blood, sinking at each step into the burning sands which scorched them ; and malefactors

[1] The Rod of Punishment.

being cut to pieces in the Asipatra Wood[1] or plunged in the Raurava region[2] or the Ksharanadi[3] or slashed with Kshuradharas[4], crying out for water, tortured by hunger and thirst, emaciated, afflicted, pale, their hair in disarray, besmeared with mud and filth, stricken and demented, running hither and thither. And Ravana beheld them in hundreds and thousands on the way, and he saw others in palaces, where songs and musical instruments could be heard, disporting themselves as the result of their good deeds. And milk was supplied to those who had given kine in charity and rice to those who had distributed rice, and dwellings to those who had bestowed dwellings on others; each reaping the fruit of his own deeds. Others among the virtuous were surrounded by youthful women adorned with gold, precious gems and magnificent pearls, resplendent in their own radiance; all these appeared to the long-armed Ravana, Lord of the Rakshasas.

"Then those who were in torment as a punishment for their evil deeds, were audaciously liberated by the Rakshasa who was powerful and valiant, and those phantoms, suddenly receiving that unexpected clemency, set free by that mighty monarch, rushed upon him, and a great clamour arose, whereupon the soldiers belonging to Dharmaraja, who were full of courage, ran to that spot.

"Armed with arrows, iron bars, spears, maces, lances and picks in their hundreds and thousands, they attacked the Pushpaka Car bravely. Seats, upper galleries, floors and arches were rapidly demolished by those warriors who fell upon it like a swarm of bees; but the celestial aerial car, though broken, was indestructible and resumed its former shape through Brahma's power. That great army of the magnanimous Yama was not to be counted and the advance guard alone numbered a hundred thousand warriors.

"Trees, rocks, missiles in their hundreds were thrown in profusion with all their strength by those valiant followers of Dashanana and by the king himself. Although their limbs were covered with blood and lacerated by every kind of missile, the

[1] Asipatravana—A wood in hell where the leaves are as sharp as swords.
[2] Raurava—Another hell.
[3] Ksharanadi—A river in hell, the waters of which were said to be corrosive.
[4] Kshuradhara—A sharp razor-like instrument.

ministers of the foremost of the titans fought like giants and the foremost of warriors, the intrepid soldiers of Yama and Ravana's followers struck each other with redoubled blows, O Prince. Thereafter, leaving their adversaries, Yama's forces rushed on Dashanana with their spears, and the King of the Rakshasas, his body streaming with blood, shone like an Ashoka Tree in flower.

" Meantime, spears, maces, javelins, lances, darts, arrows, rocks and trees poured from the mighty bow of that courageous warrior. A formidable shower of trees, stones and weapons of all sorts fell on the forces of Yama and thereafter on the earth.

" Having severed all those missiles and repelled that hail of projectiles, the soldiers of Yama struck that redoubtable titan, who fought single-handed against hundreds and thousands and they all surrounded him like a mass of clouds round a mountain and, with their Bhindipalas and their spears, they assailed him with such force that he could scarcely breathe. His coat of mail severed, cut to pieces midst rivers of blood flowing from his person, full of rage, he abandoned Pushpaka and leapt to the earth. Furnished with his bow and arrows, he expanded in energy in the combat and speedily regaining his senses, full of fury, he stood there like a second Antaka. Placing the celestial shaft, Pashupata[1] on his bow and bending it, he cried ' Stay! Stay! ' and, stretching the cord up to his ear, he loosed that missile in the fight, as Shankara when attacking Tripura.

"And that dart with its circle of fire and smoke resembled a blazing fire that, growing, consumes a forest during the summer season. With its crown of flames, that shaft, loosed by that eater of flesh, ranged the field of battle freely, reducing the bushes and trees to ashes. Then the soldiers of Vaivasvata fell like the standards of the Great God Indra, consumed by the violence of the blaze, and that Rakshasa of formidable prowess, with his companions uttered a great roar which convulsed the earth."

[1] The weapon of Shiva.

CHAPTER 22

The Duel between Ravana and Yama; Brahma intervenes

"HEARING that great tumult, the Lord Vaivasvata realised his enemy had triumphed and that his army was destroyed. Knowing his forces were slain, his eyes red with anger, he addressed his charioteer, saying :—

"'Take my chariot there speedily!'

"Thereupon the driver brought the vast celestial car of his most powerful master and that exceedingly energetic one ascended it. And Mrityu, the destroyer of the Triple World of perpetual change, with a lance and mallet in his hand and Time as his Rod, stood at Yama's side; and that divine weapon blazed like fire.

"Beholding Kala[1] highly enraged, inspiring terror in the whole universe, the Three Worlds were agitated and the inhabitants of heaven were seized with fear. Thereafter the charioteer urged on his steeds that were the colour of blood, and drove his thundering chariot to meet the Lord of the Rakshasas; and, in an instant, his horses, the equals of those belonging to Hari, carried Yama with the speed of thought to the scene of the combat.

"Seeing that terrible chariot that Mrityu accompanied, the followers of the foremost of the Rakshasas took to their heels, saying :—

"'It is impossible for us to contend with him!' In their cowardice, beside themselves with terror, they fled away, Dashagriva, however, in the presence of that chariot that spread terror in the Universe, remained unmoved and experienced no fear.

"Coming within range of his adversary, Yama, in fury, loosed arrows and darts piercing Ravana's vital parts but he, master of himself, let fly a hail of shafts on Yama's chariot, as a cloud lets fall its waters, and though the Rakshasa was unable to repel those

[1] Kala—Time as Death.

great shafts that fell in hundreds on his mighty breast, yet he experienced no ill effect ; nevertheless, after a fight lasting seven days, and all those missiles of various kinds that Yama, the Scourge of his Foes, loosed upon him, Ravana, averting his face, became distraught and a terrible struggle ensued between Yama and the Rakshasa, each eager to triumph and neither turning back in the fight.

"At that time, Devas, Gandharvas, Siddhas and great Rishis with Prajapati at their head, assembled on the field of battle, for the duel taking place between the Lord of the Rakshasas and the King of the Dead appeared like the dissolution of the worlds.

" Ravana, stretching his bow, like unto Indra's thunderbolt, filled the whole of space with his shafts and he struck Mrityu with four barbed arrows and his driver with seven, thereafter with his swift arrows piercing Yama in his vital parts a hundred thousand times.

" Then, from the mouth of the enraged Yama, a circle of flame issued, accompanied by wind and smoke, verily a fire of wrath. Beholding that marvel in the presence of Gods and Danavas, both Mrityu and Kala were transported with rage and Mrityu, in a paroxysm of anger, said to Vaivasvata :—' Suffer me to destroy this wicked Rakshasa ! This very day, in accord with the natural law, this Rakshasa shall cease to be ! Hiranyakashipu, the fortunate Namuchi, Shambara, Nishandi, Dhumaketu, Bali, Virochana, the Giant Shambhu, mighty monarchs, Vritra and Bana, the Rajarishis versed in the Shastras, Punnagas, Daityas, Yakshas and troops of Apsaras, with the earth and its mountains, rivers and trees and the great ocean, have all been destroyed by me at the end of the World cycle, O Great King. Those beings and others in great numbers, who were powerful and invincible, have been annihilated by my glance, how much more easily can I bring about the death of this ranger of the night? Let me go therefore, O Virtuous Lord, that I may destroy him ! No creature, however powerful he may be, can survive if my glance falls upon him. This power is not mine own ; it is a natural law that on whosoever I cast my glance, O Kala, he does not live even for an instant.'

" Thus spoke Mrityu and the illustrious Lord of Justice answered :—

" 'Calm thyself, I shall slay him!' Then the Lord Vaivasvata, his eyes red with anger, lifted up the Rod of Death that never misses its target, that Rod to the sides of which the snares of destruction are attached, and he seized hold of a hammer like unto a flash of lightning, which, by its aspect alone, extinguishes the breath of living beings, how much more when it falls on them! That weapon surrounded by flames, that huge mace, that seemed to consume the Rakshasa, emitted sparks when that mighty being took hold of it. Then, as the God prepared to smite Ravana, the Grandsire of the World appeared suddenly and said :—

" 'O Great-armed Vaivasvata, O Thou, whose courage is immeasurable, know that thou must not strike the ranger of the night with thy Rod. I have bestowed a boon on him, O King of the Gods, thou must not render it void for I have pledged my word! Verily he who makes me appear as a deceiver, whether he be God or a mere mortal, renders the Triple World guilty of deceit! That terrible weapon, if loosed in anger, will strike down all beings, irrespective if they are dear to me or no. Inevitable destruction and death to all follows on that Rod of Death of immeasurable splendour created by me! Undoubtedly, O My Friend, thou shouldst not let it fall on Ravana's head, for once it falls, none will survive even for an instant. Should it fall on the Rakshasa Dashagriva, whether he die or does not die, either way, deceit will have been practised! Therefore turn aside that uplifted Rod from the King of Lanka and confirm my good faith in deference to the worlds!'

"Thus addressed, the virtuous Lord of Death, Yama answered :—

" 'I shall restrain the Rod as thou art our Master, but, as I may not slay mine adversary who is protected by thy boon, what shall I do now in the fight? I shall render myself invisible to the Rakshasa!'

" So speaking, he vanished with his chariot and horses.

" Thereafter, Dashagriva, master of the field, proclaimed his name and, re-mounting Pushpaka, emerged from Yama's abode. Vaivasvata, however, with the Gods, preceded by Brahma, joyfully returned to the Celestial Region, as did the great Muni Narada also."

CHAPTER 23

Ravana's Struggle with the Sons of Varuna

" HAVING overcome Yama the foremost of the Gods, the Ten-necked Ravana, proud warrior, went to seek out his followers. Beholding him with his limbs covered with blood, riddled with wounds, they were amazed. With Maricha at their head, they offered felicitations to him on his victory and re-assured by him, they all took their places in the Pushpaka Chariot. Thereafter the Rakshasa descended into the watery region[1] inhabited by Daityas and Uragas under the powerful protection of Varuna. From there he went to the Capital Bhogavati, where Vasuki reigns, and, having subjugated the Nagas, he joyfully entered the city made of precious stones. There the Nivatakavachas[2], Daityas protected by Brahma dwelt, and the Rakshasa, approaching them, challenged them to fight. Instantly those intrepid Daityas, full of valour, armed with every weapon in their martial ardour, rushed out joyfully.

" Then the Rakshasas and Danavas struck each other furiously with spears, tridents, Kalishas, harpoons, swords and Parashvadhas and, while they fought thus, a whole year passed away without either side being victorious or suffering defeat.

"At the end of that time, the Grandsire, Lord of the Three Worlds, the imperishable God, appeared in his marvellous chariot and, in order to bring the bellicose activities of the Nivatakavachas to a close, that Ancient One made known to them the purpose of his intervention, saying :—

" ' Ravana cannot be overcome in battle by the Gods or Asuras and you yourselves cannot be destroyed even by the Immortals and Danavas together. It would find favour with me, if the Rakshasas were joined with you in friendship ; undoubtedly all benefits are shared by friends.'

[1] Watery Region—Lit: Rasatala, the hell said to be situated at the bottom of the sea.
[2] A race of giants.

" Thereupon, in the presence of fire, Ravana concluded an alliance with the Nivatakavachas and became their friend.

" Honoured by them according to tradition, he sojourned in that place for a year, where he passed his time exactly as in his own city. There, having studied a hundred forms of magic he became proficient in one, then he set out to explore Rasatala in order to discover the capital of the Lord of the Waters, Varuna. Reaching the City of Ashma, he slew all the inhabitants and, with his sword, pierced his powerful brother-in-law, Vidyujjihva, the consort of Shurpanakha, who was proud of his strength and who, with his tongue, was licking a Rakshasa, preparatory to devouring him. Having slain him, Ravana thereafter, in an instant, destroyed four hundred Daityas. It was then that the celestial abode of Varuna, resembling a cloud, dazzling as Mount Kailasha, appeared to that monarch, and he beheld there the Cow, Surabha, from whom milk ever flows which forms the Ocean Kshiroda.

" Ravana saw Vararani, Mother of cows and bulls also, from whom is born Chandra of cooling rays, who ushers in the night, taking refuge under whom, the great Rishis subsist on the froth of that milk from which the Nectar of Immortality, the food of the Gods sprang, as also Svadha, the food of the Pitris. Having circumambulated that wonderful Cow, known to men as Surabha, Ravana penetrated into a formidable region defended by troops of every kind. It was then he beheld the splendid residence of Varuna, abounding in hundreds of cataracts, ever wearing a delightful aspect and resembling an autumn cloud.

" Having struck down the leaders of the army in battle, whom he riddled with blows, Ravana said to those warriors :—' Speedily inform the King that Ravana has come hither seeking battle, saying "Accept this challenge if thou art not afraid, otherwise, paying obeisance to him declare, ' I am defeated ! ' " '

" Meantime, the sons and grandsons of the magnanimous Varuna, provoked, set out with Go and Pushkara.[1]

" Those valiant beings, surrounded by their troops, harnessed their chariots that coursed wheresoever they desired and shone like the rising sun.

[1] Two Generals.

" Thereafter a terrible struggle ensued, causing the hair to stand on end, between the children of the Lord of the Waters and the crafty Ravana. The brave companions of the Rakshasa Dashagriva, in an instant, destroyed Varuna's entire army.

" Seeing their army struck down in the fight, the sons of Varuna, overwhelmed by a hail of missiles, broke off the conflict and, as they were escaping underground, they beheld Ravana in the Pushpaka Chariot and hurled themselves into the sky in their fleet cars. Having attained an equally advantageous position, a desperate fight broke out afresh and a terrible conflict arose in the air like unto that between the Gods and the Danavas. With their shafts, like unto Pavaka's, they put Ravana to flight and, in their joy, emitted countless shouts of triumph.

" Then Mahodara, provoked, on seeing Ravana thus sore pressed, banished all fear of death and, in his martial ardour, casting infuriated glances round about, with his mace struck the chariots that were coursing at will with the speed of the wind, causing them to fall on the earth. Having slain the soldiers and destroyed the chariots of Varuna's sons, Mahodara, seeing them deprived of their cars, emitted a loud shout. The chariots with their steeds and their excellent drivers, destroyed by Mahodara, lay on the earth and, though bereft of their vehicles, the sons of the magnanimous Varuna, by virtue of their natural prowess, remained courageously in the sky without being perturbed. Stretching their bows, they pierced Mahodara and, gathering together, they surrounded Ravana on the battlefield and, with their formidable shafts, like unto thunderbolts loosed from their bows, they overwhelmed him in their rage, as clouds rain down on a great mountain.

" On his side, the irascible Dashagriva, like unto the fire of dissolution, showered down a fearful hail of missiles on their vital parts with irresistible and uninterrupted force, and there were maces of every kind, Bhallas in their hundreds, harpoons, lances and huge Shataghnis. Then Varuna's sons, reduced to walking on foot, saw themselves restricted like unto sixty-year old elephants who have entered a great morass and, beholding the sons of Varuna thus stricken and exhausted, the supremely powerful Ravana emitted shouts of joy like unto an immense cloud, and letting forth those loud roars, he struck Varuna's

offspring with shafts of every kind which he showered down upon them like a cloud.

" Thereupon they turned back and fell headlong to the ground and their followers carried them hastily from the battlefield to their homes, whilst the Rakshasa cried out ' Carry the tidings to Varuna ! '

" Thereafter one of Varuna's counsellors, named Prahasta, answered him saying :—

" ' Varuna, the Lord of the Waters, that mighty monarch, whom thou art challenging to combat, has gone to Brahmaloka to hear the Gandharva music. Why exhaust thyself in vain, O Hero, since the King is not here ? '

" Then the Lord of the Rakshasas, having heard this, proclaimed his name and emitted joyful cries ; thereafter, issuing out of Varuna's abode and returning from whence he had come, Ravana ascended into the sky and directed his course to Lanka."

SOME COMMENTATORS CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING FIVE CHAPTERS TO BE INTERPOLATIONS.

FIRST OF THE INTERPOLATED CHAPTERS

Ravana's Meeting with Bali

" THEREAFTER Ravana's war-intoxicated followers ranged the City of Ashma and Dashanana beheld there a great palace, the archways of which were set with emeralds and adorned with a network of pearls. Abounding in golden pillars and sacred altars, the stairways, made of gold, were studded with diamonds and hung with small bells and delightful seats placed here and there, so that it resembled the palace of Mahendra.

" Beholding that beautiful dwelling, the supremely powerful Ravana reflected within himself :—' Whose is this marvellous mansion like unto the peak of Mount Meru ? Go, O Prahasta and ascertain speedily to whom this residence belongs ! '

" Thereupon Prahasta entered that excellent abode and, finding no one in the first apartment, he went to another,

penetrating into seven rooms till at last he observed a fire burning, in the flames of which he beheld a man seated, laughing aloud; and, hearing that dreadful laughter, Prahasta's hair stood on end. The man thus seated as if unconscious in the fire, blinding to look upon as the sun and like unto Yama himself, was wearing a golden chain. Beholding this, that night-ranger speedily left the house and communicated all to Ravana.

"O Rama, Dashagriva, resembling a piece of collyrium, alighting from Pushpaka, sought to enter that dwelling but a huge-bodied person, moon-crested, barred the door. His tongue resembled a flame, his eyes were red, his teeth dazzling, his lips like the Bimba Fruit, his nose dreadful and he was handsome of form with a neck curved like a conch, marked with three lines, his jaws enormous, his beard thick, his bones well covered with flesh, possessing large fangs, his whole aspect terrible, causing the hair to stand on end; and he held a mace in his hand as he stood at the door; then as Ravana beheld him, his hair rose on end, his heart beat furiously and his body trembled.

"Perceiving these inauspicious omens, Ravana began to ponder within himself and while he was reflecting thus, that Being addressed him, saying:—

"'Of what art thou thinking, O Rakshasa? Tell me without fear! I shall confer the pleasure of combat on thee, O Hero, O Night-ranger!'

"Thereafter he spoke again to Ravana, saying:—

"'Dost thou desire to enter into conflict with Bali or hast thou some other intention?'

"Hearing these words, Ravana was overwhelmed with fear so that his hair stood on end but, recollecting himself, he answered:-

"'O Thou, the foremost of those skilled in speech, who resideth in this mansion? I would enter into combat with him if thou counsellest me to do so!'

"Then that Being answered him, saying:—

"'The Lord of the Danavas lives here; he is supremely magnanimous, valiant, possessing truth for his prowess, endowed with many qualities, resplendent, like unto Yama bearing a noose in his hand, bright as the rising sun, incapable of being

defeated in combat, impetuous, invincible, victorious, a veritable ocean of accomplishments, soft-spoken, the support of those who depend on him, devoted to his preceptor and the brahmins, conversant with the proper time (for executing actions), gifted with great powers, truthful, handsome, skilful, heroic, ever engaged in the study of the Veda; though walking on foot, he moves like the wind, he shines like fire, radiating heat like the sun, he stands in awe of neither Gods, spirits, snakes nor birds, fear is unknown to him. Dost thou wish to fight with Bali, O Lord of the Rakshasas, O Thou gifted with supreme energy? Then enter this abode speedily and engage in the encounter!'

"Being thus addressed, the Ten-necked Titan went in to where Bali was, and that foremost of the Danavas, who resembled a flame of fire and was as hard to gaze upon as the sun, beholding the Lord of Lanka, burst into laughter and, taking the Rakshasa by the hand placed him on his lap, saying:—

"'O Ten-necked Lord of the Rakshasas, O Long-armed One, what desire of thine shall I gratify? Say what has brought thee hither?'

"Being thus addressed by Bali, Ravana answered:—

"'O Illustrious One, I have heard that formerly thou wert imprisoned by Vishnu, verily I have the power to release thee from these bonds!'

"Hearing these words of Ravana, Bali laughed and said:—

"'Hear and I will tell thee, O Ravana! The Dark-hued One Who stands at the door, formerly subdued all the Danavas and other powerful Lords and I also was imprisoned by Him. He is as invincible as Death; none in the world can delude Him. He, Who stands at the entrance, is the Destroyer, Creator and Preserver, Lord of the Three Worlds. Neither thou nor I know Him; He is the Lord of the past, present and future, He is Time, He is the Kali Yuga, He overthrows all beings; He is the Creator and Destroyer of the Three Worlds and of all animate and inanimate things; that great God of all Gods creates and re-creates the universe again and again for ever. O Night-ranger, He is the Dispenser of the fruits of sacrifices, gifts and oblations, verily He is the Creator and Preserver of the entire Universe, there is none in the Three Worlds comparable with Him in majesty and glory. O Scion of the House of Poulastya.

He has the Danavas, our forbears, and thee, under His control, like beasts bound with ropes.

" ' Vritra, Danu, Shuka, Shambu, Nishumbha, Shumbha, Kalanemi, Prahlada and others, Kuta, Virochana, Mridu, Yamala, Arjuna, Kansa, Kaitabha and Madhu all radiated heat like the sun and were as resplendent as its rays, all moved like the wind and showered down rain like unto Indra, all celebrated sacrifices and underwent severe penances, all were exalted of soul and followers of the Path of Yoga, all acquired wealth and enjoyed many pleasures, all distributed gifts abundantly, studied the Veda and protected their subjects, all were defenders of their kinsfolk and slayers of their foes, none could stand against them in the Three Worlds and they were powerful, thoroughly conversant with the Shastras and all branches of learning and were never known to retreat in battle.

" ' They ruled the kingdoms of the Gods, having overcome them a thousand times, and they were ever engaged in harassing them and protecting their own followers. Inflated with pride and arrogance, given to attachment, they were as effulgent as the newly risen sun, but the glorious Hari, the Lord Vishnu knows how to bring about the destruction of those who perpetually trouble the Gods. He creates them all and Himself constantly brings about their end; existing by Himself at the time of dissolution.

" ' These highly powerful and illustrious Danava Chiefs, able to assume any form at will, were destroyed by that glorious God, and further, all those heroes, said to be invincible and irresistible in warfare, have been discomfited by the wondrous power of Kritanta.'[1]

" Having spoken thus to Ravana, the Lord of the Danavas again addressed the King of the Rakshasas, saying :—

" ' O Hero, O Thou gifted with great strength, take up this shining disc that thou seest and draw near to my side; I shall then tell thee how I have broken my bonds forever. Do what I have told thee, O Long-armed One, delay not ! '

" O Descendant of Raghu, hearing this, the highly powerful Rakshasa, laughing, proceeded to where that celestial disc was. Proud of his strength he deemed himself able to lift it with ease

[1] Kritanta—The incarnation of the force of destiny, lit: ' Bringer to an end '.

but, taking hold of it, he could not move it by any means and, being ashamed, that highly powerful one again attempted it and barely raising it, that Rakshasa immediately fell to the earth unconscious, bathed in a pool of blood, like unto a Sala Tree that has been felled.

"Meantime the counsellors of the Lord of the Rakshasas, who were in the Pushpaka Chariot, cried out loudly 'Alas! Alas!' and thereafter, the Rakshasa, regaining his senses, rose up, his head bowed in shame and Bali said to him :—

"'Draw near, O Foremost of the Rakshasas, and listen to my words, O Hero! This disc encrusted with gems, which thou didst seek to lift, was an ornament for the ear belonging to one of my forbears and has remained here where it fell, look upon it! O Thou, endowed with great strength, the other fell on the summit of a mountain and, besides these two, his crown also fell on the earth before an altar during the encounter. Formerly neither time, death nor disease could overcome mine ancestor Hiranyakashipu, nor could he be visited by death during the day, at dawn or dusk. O Foremost of the Rakshasas, neither a dry nor a wet object nor any weapon could encompass his end.

"'It came about that he entered into a dreadful quarrel with Prahlada[1] and antagonism having grown up between him and the defenceless and courageous Prahlada, the Lord appeared in the form of Nrsingha, he of dreadful aspect who was the cause of terror to all beings. O Foremost of the Rakshasas, that awful Being, casting glances here and there, overwhelmed the Three Worlds and, taking up Hiranyakashipu in his arms, he tore his body open with his nails; that same Being, the supreme and taintless Vasudeva stands at the door! I shall now tell thee of that supreme God, do thou hear me, if my words have any significance for thee. He who stands at the door has subdued thousands of Indras and hundreds and thousands of great Gods and Rishis.'

"Hearing these words, Ravana said :—

"'I have beheld Kritanta, the Lord of Spirits and Death Himself! His hair is formed of serpents and scorpions, he bears a noose in his hand, his tongue is like unto a flame of fire darting like lightning, his jaws dreadful, his eyes red; he is endowed with

[1] Prahlada his son, a devotee of Vishnu.

immense speed and is the terror of all beings, like unto the sun incapable of being looked upon. Unconquerable in combat, the chastiser of evil-doers, yet even he was overcome in conflict, nor did I experience the least fear of him, O Lord of the Danavas. I do not know this person (at the door), it behoveth thee to tell me who he is.'

"Hearing these words of Ravana, Bali, the Son of Virochana, answered :—

"'He is the Lord Hari, Narayana, the Protector of the Three Worlds. He is Ananta, Kapila, Vishnu and the highly effulgent Nrsingha; He is Kratudhama and Sudhama who bears the dreadful mace in his hands. He resembles the Twelve Adityas, He is the first Man, the primeval and excellent Purusha; He is like unto a dark blue cloud and is the first Lord of the Gods. O Long-armed One, He is encircled by flame; He is the supreme Yogi, beloved of His devotees; He projected the universe, preserves it and destroys it, assuming the form of Time endowed with great power. This Hari, bearing the discus in His hand, is the sacrifice and is worshipped in the sacrifice, He is the one great form of all the Gods, all beings, all worlds and all knowledge; He is Baladeva, O Mighty-armed One, the Slayer of Warriors; He has the eye of a hero and is the eternal Guru, the Father of the Three Worlds. All Sages, desirous of liberation, meditate on Him. He who knows Him thus, is freed from sin; he, who remembers, adores and worships Him, attains all.'

"Hearing these words of Bali, the highly powerful Ravana, his eyes red with anger, went out with uplifted weapons.

"Beholding him thus inflamed with fury, the Lord Hari, Who bore a club in His hand, reflected, 'In deference to Brahma, I shall not slay this sinner yet,'[1] and making himself invisible, He vanished.

"Then Ravana, not beholding that Purusha there, rejoiced, and, shouting exultantly, issued out of Varuna's abode and departed by the same way by which he had come."

[1] Since Brahma had granted him the boon of invulnerability.

UTTARA KANDA

SECOND OF THE INTERPOLATED CHAPTERS

1st SERIES

Ravana challenges the Sun God

"After reflecting awhile, the Lord of Lanka went to the Solar Region, passing the night on the enchanting summit of Mount Sumeru. Riding in the Pushpaka Chariot, which was endowed with the speed of the sun's steeds, he, by various ways advanced, and beheld the glorious and resplendent Sun, the purifier of all, adorned with golden bracelets and crowned with a halo encrusted with gems. His lovely countenance was graced with a pair of brilliant earrings, his person embellished with Keyuras,[1] golden ornaments and garlands of crimson lotuses. His body was annointed with red sandalwood and he was blazing with a thousand rays.

" Beholding the Sun, foremost of the Gods, Surya, that primeval Deity without end or middle, having Uchhaisravas as his steed, He the Witness of the World, Lord of the Earth, Ravana was overwhelmed by His rays and said to Prahasta :—

" ' O Counsellor, do thou go at my behest and apprise the Sun of mine intention saying, ' Ravana has come hither to challenge thee, do thou fight or admit defeat; do one or the other speedily !'

" Hearing these words, that Rakshasa advanced towards the sun and beheld two door-keepers named Pingala and Dandi and, having communicated Ravana's resolutions to them, he stood silent, being overpowered by the sun's rays.

"Approaching the Sun, Dandi related the matter to him and, hearing of Ravana's intention, the sagacious Surya, that enemy of the night, said to him :—

" ' O Dandi, either subdue Ravana or say to him " I have been defeated, do as thou deemest best ! "

"At this command, Dandi approached the high-souled Ravana and informed him of what the Sun had said.

" Hearing Dandi's words, the Lord of the Rakshasas proclaimed his victory by a roll of drums and went away."

[1] Keyuras—Bracelets worn on the upper arm.

THIRD OF THE INTERPOLATED CHAPTERS

1st SERIES

Ravana's Encounter with the King Mandhata

" HAVING passed the night on the enchanting summit of Mount Sumeru and deliberated for some time, the mighty Lord of Lanka went to the region of the moon. There he beheld one sprinkled with heavenly unguents, seated in his chariot attended by Apsaras and being embraced by them, proceeding on his way, worn out by the gratification of desire. Seeing such a person, his curiosity was aroused and, observing a Rishi, named Parvata, there, he said to him :—

" ' Thou art welcome, O Blessed Sage, verily thou hast come at a fitting moment ! Who is this shameless being proceeding in a chariot attended by Apsaras ? He appears to be unaware of his peril ? '

" Thus addressed by Ravana, the Rishi Parvata, said to him :—

" ' O Child, O Thou gifted with high intelligence, hear me and I will tell thee the truth. By him all these worlds have been subdued and Brahma propitiated, and he is on his way to a blissful place. As thou, by virtue of asceticism, hast conquered the worlds, O Lord of the Rakshasas, so has he ; and, having drunk the Soma-juice and performed many pious acts, he has set forth on his journey. O Foremost of the Rakshasas, thou art valiant and hast truth for thy prowess ; the mighty are never offended by the virtuous ! '

" Then Ravana beheld a large and excellent car, radiant and effulgent, from which the sound of music and singing issued and he said :—

" ' O Great Rishi, who is that person endowed with radiance who proceeds surrounded by charming singers, dancing girls and Kinneras ? '

" Hearing these words, Parvata, the foremost of Sages, again replied :—

" ' He is a hero, a mighty warrior, who has never retreated in battle. Having performed innumerable heroic feats in combat

and slain many adversaries, he has received countless wounds and finally sacrificed his life for his master. Having destroyed a myriad people in battle, he has at last been slain by his enemies. He is now to be a guest of Indra or, it may be that he is going to some other auspicious region. This foremost of men is being entertained by singing and dancing.'

" Then Ravana enquired once more :—

" ' Who goeth yonder shining like the sun ? '

" Hearing Ravana's words, Parvata said :—

" ' That person, resembling the full moon, adorned with various ornaments and robes, O Mighty King, whom thou beholdest in a great chariot accompanied by troops of Apsaras, has distributed much gold, therefore he proceedeth in supreme effulgence in a swiftly coursing car.'

" Hearing Parvata's words, Ravana said again :—

" ' O Foremost of Rishis, do thou tell me which of these kings proceeding here, if entreated, will grant me the pleasure of battle ? Verily thou art my father ; do thou point out to me such a one, O Thou conversant with piety.'

" Thus addressed, Parvata, once more replied to Ravana, saying :—

" ' O Great King, all these monarchs desire heaven not conflict, but, O Mighty One, I shall indicate to thee one who will enter into combat with thee.

" ' There is a supremely powerful king, the Lord of the Seven Islands, well known by the name of Mandhata, who will do battle with thee.'

" Hearing these words of Parvata, Ravana said :—

" ' Do thou tell me where this king doth dwell, O Thou of great devotion, I shall go to where that foremost of men resides.'

" Hearing Ravana's words, the Sage said again :—

" ' The son of Yuvaneshwa, having conquered the world consisting of the Seven Islands, from sea to sea, Mandhata, the foremost of kings is coming here.'

" Thereupon the long-armed Ravana, proud of the boon conferred upon him in the Three Worlds, beheld the heroic Mandhata, the Lord of Ayodhya and the foremost of monarchs. The Lord of the Seven Islands was proceeding in a gilded and decorated car resplendent as that of Mahendra, radiant in his

own beauty, sprinkled with celestial unguents, and the Ten-necked One said to him :—' Do thou give me battle ! '

" Being thus addressed, he, laughing, said to Dashanana :—

" ' If thy life is not dear to thee, then enter into combat with me, O Rakshasa ! '

" Hearing these words of Mandhata, Ravana said :—

" ' Ravana has experienced no harm from Varuna, Kuvera or Yama, what should he fear from a mere man ? '

" Having spoken thus, the Lord of the Rakshasas issued orders to the titans who were invincible in battle, whereupon, in fury, the counsellors of the wicked-souled Rakshasa, well skilled in the art of warfare, began to discharge a hail of arrows.

" Then the mighty monarch, Mandhata, with golden feathered shafts, assailed Prahasta, Shuka, Sarana, Mahodara, Virupaksha, Akampana and other generals, and Prahasta covered the king with arrows but, before they reached him, that foremost of men shattered them to pieces. As grass is consumed by fire so was that host of Rakshasas consumed by the King Mandhata by means of hundreds of Bushundis, Bhallas, Bhindipalas and Tomaras.[1] As Karttikeya sundered Mount Krauncha with his shafts, so did Mandhata, full of rage, pierce Prahasta with five Tomaras endowed with supreme velocity and, brandishing his mace, resembling Yama's, again and again he struck Ravana's chariot violently and that club resembling lightning, fell with force so that Ravana was thrown down like unto Shakra's banner. Thereafter the joy of King Mandhata was increased, as the waters of the salty ocean at the time of the full moon, but the entire Rakshasa Host, shrieking with terror, stood round the unconscious Lord of the Rakshasas. Speedily regaining his senses, Ravana, the terror of all beings, Lord of Lanka, showered missiles on the person of Mandhata and, beholding that king falling unconscious, the highly powerful rangers of the night were greatly delighted and emitted leonine roars.

" Regaining his senses in a moment, the King of Ayodhya, beholding his adversary acclaimed by his followers and ministers, was enraged, and assuming a dazzling form like unto the sun or moon, instantly began to slay the titans with a dreadful hail of

[1] See Weapons Glossary.

shafts; and his arrows and the noise thereof overwhelmed the entire Rakshasa Host, that resembled a tempestuous ocean.

" Thereupon a fearful conflict arose between man and demon and those two heroic and high-souled leaders of men and Rakshasas, like persons possessed, taking up the attitude of warriors, entered the field with swords and bows and, highly enraged, began to assail each other with shafts, wounding each other in the attack. Then, setting the Raudra-weapon on his bow, Ravana discharged it, but Mandhata turned it aside with the Fire-weapon. Thereafter Dashanana took up the Gandharva weapon and King Mandhata the Brahma-astra, a source of terror to all. And Ravana took up the Celestial and dreadful Pashupata-weapon, the increaser of fear in the Three Worlds, obtained from Rudra, by virtue of his rigid penances.

" Beholding this, all moveable and immoveable beings were stricken with terror and the Three Worlds, including all that was animate and inanimate, Gods and Serpents, together took refuge in their abodes under the earth.

" Meantime, by virtue of their meditation, the two foremost of ascetics, Poulastya and Galava, aware of the conflict, remonstrated with these two warriors in various ways and restrained the King and the Lord of the Rakshasas. Thereafter the man and the Rakshasa were reconciled and, highly delighted, returned from whence they had come."

FOURTH OF THE INTERPOLATED CHAPTERS
1st SERIES

Ravana visits the Moon Region and is given a Boon by Brahma

" THE two Rishis having departed, Ravana, the Lord of the Rakshasas, proceeded for forty thousand miles in the upper air, whereupon he reached that excellent higher sphere where swans, endowed with every virtue, dwell. And, having gone on, he ascended yet higher for ten thousand leagues, where on all sides, the clouds, Agneya, Pakshana and Brahma[1] are eternally

[1] Agneya—Clouds produced by fire.
Pakshana—Winged Clouds.
Brahma—Those created by Brahma.

established. Thereafter, he proceeded to an excellent airy region where the high-souled Siddhas and Charanas ever abide, which is ten thousand leagues in extent.

" O Slayer of thy Foes, he then passed to a fourth region, where the Bhutas and Vinayakas perpetually sojourn and thereafter, he went to the fifth aerial realm, which extends over ten thousand leagues, where Gunga, the foremost of rivers is to be found, and the elephants headed by Kumuda, from whose bodies, drops pour down constantly as they sport in the waters, spout forth the sacred stream which they sprinkle in all directions. Here the waters fall down in rain and snow under the rays of the sun, purified by the wind, O Raghava.

" Then that Rakshasa went to the sixth aerial region, O Thou endowed with great radiance, where Garuda dwells, ever revered by his kinsfolk and friends, and, thereafter, ascended to the seventh aerial region, lying ten thousand leagues higher, where the Seven Rishis dwell.[1] And again proceeding ten thousand leagues higher he reached the eighth aerial region where Gunga, known as the Ganges of the sky, having strong currents, is found in the path of the sun and, who, upheld by air, sends forth a great roaring.

" Now I shall describe the region yet higher than these, where the Moon-god dwells and the extent thereof is eighty thousand leagues. There the Moon encircled by stars and planets, from whom hundreds and thousands of rays stream forth, illumines the world, bringing happiness to all beings.

" Thereupon, beholding Dashagriva, the Moon, blazing up as it were, consumed him with its cold fires and, stricken with fear of those rays, his counsellors were unable to withstand them and Prahasta, uttering the words ' Let victory be thine ! ' thereafter said :—

" ' O King, we are being destroyed by the cold and must leave this place ! O Foremost of Monarchs, the icy rays of the moon have the property of fire.'

" Hearing the words of Prahasta, Ravana, beside himself with wrath, lifted his bow, twanging it and began to assail the Moon with Narachas, whereupon Brahma speedily went to that lunar region and said :—

[1] The Plough of which the Seven Rishis are said to be the Regents.

"'O Ten-necked One, O Mighty-armed One, O Son of Vishravas, O Gentle One, do thou go hence from here speedily; do not oppress the Moon, for that highly effulgent King of the Twice-born desireth the well-being of all. I will bestow a mystical formula on thee! He who recollects it at the hour of death, does not succumb!'

"Thus addressed, the Ten-necked Rakshasa, with joined palms, said:—

"'O God, if I have found favour with thee, then, O Lord of the Worlds, O Thou of great penances, impart that sacred mantra to me, O Thou truly Pious One, reciting which, O Great One, I shall be liberated from fear of the Celestials. Verily, by Thy favour, O Lord of the Gods, I shall become invincible to all the Asuras, Danavas and Birds.'

"Thus accosted, Brahma said to Dashanana:—

"'O Lord of the Rakshasas, do not repeat this mantra daily but only when thy life is in danger. Holding a string of Rudraksha beads and repeating it, thou shalt become invincible; but if thou dost not recite it, thou shalt not meet with success. Hear and I shall communicate this sacred formula to thee, O Foremost of the Rakshasas, reciting which thou shalt obtain victory in the encounter:—

"'Salutations unto Thee, O God, O Lord of Lords, O Thou worshipped by the Celestials and Asuras. O Thou, the same in the past, present and future, O Great God, O Thou having tawny eyes, O Thou, a boy assuming the form of an aged Being, O Thou who wearest a tiger skin. O God, Thou art worthy to be worshipped and art the Lord of the Three Worlds. Thou art Ishwara, Hara, Haratanemi, the Fire at the end of the World Cycle, Yugantadahaka; Thou art Baladeva, Thou art Ganesha, Lokashambu, and Lokapala, Thou art endowed with huge arms, Thou art blessed, the Bearer of the Trident; Thou art possessed of dreadful teeth and jaws, the greatest of the Gods, Thou art Time, Thou art Power, Thou art the Blue-throated[1] and possessed of a huge belly, Thou art Devantaka, the foremost of the ascetics and the Lord of all creatures. Thou art the Leader, Protector, Hari-Hara, Destroyer and Preserver, Thou wearest

[1] Blue-throated—Shiva who drank the poison churned from the ocean and became blue-throated. The story is told in the classics.

matted locks, art clean-shaven and wrapped in a loincloth, Thou art mighty and illustrious, Thou art the Lord of Spirits and Goblins, the Support of all, Protector of all, Destroyer of all, the Creator and the Eternal Preceptor, Thou art the Bearer of the Kamandalu,[1] the Wielder of the Pinaka Bow and the Dhurjata.[2] Thou art worthy of veneration, Thou art Aum, the highest of all, the First Chanter of the Sama-Veda. Thou art Death and the nature of death, Pariyatra[3] and the Observer of great vows; Thou art a brahmachari dwelling in a cave bearing a Vina, Panava and quiver in thine hands; Thou art immortal, lovely to look upon as the newly risen sun; Thou dwellest in the crematorium; Thou art the illustrious Lord of Uma, transcending all taint; Thou didst pluck out the eyes of Bhagadeva and the teeth of Pusha. Thou art the overcomer of fever and bearest a noose in Thy hand, verily Thou art Dissolution and Time of the flaming mouth, fire being Thy symbol, Thou art highly effulgent and the Lord of men. Thou art demented and causest people to tremble; Thou art the Fourth and deeply venerated of men, Thou art the Holy Dwarf, Vamanadeva, and the Dwarf who circumambulates the East. Thou wearest the semblance of a beggar with three locks, and art crafty by nature. Thou didst stay the hand of Indra and of the Vasus, Thou art the Seasons, the Creator of seasons; Thou art Time, Honey and the One of honey eyes. Thou art the Lord of herbs, a lordly tree bearing fruit and flowers; Thy seat is made of arrows; Thou art ever worshipped by people in all conditions; Thou art the Creator and Protector of the Universe, the Eternal and true Purusha; Thou art the Controller of Righteousness, Virupaksha, the Three Dharmas, the Protector of all beings. Thou art the Three-eyed One of many forms blazing like a million suns, Thou art the Lord of the Celestials, the foremost of the Gods, bearing matted locks and the crescent moon, Thou art worthy of being approached and art one with created beings; Thou art the Player of all musical instruments, ever creating and binding all, and dost bring about the liberation of all beings. Thou art Pushpadanta,

[1] Kamandalu—The coconut loshtha used by ascetics who may not touch metal.
[2] Dhurjata—Lit: a burden, ' He whose matted locks are a burden ', or He who bears the burden of the Three Worlds.
[3] Pariyatra—The name of a well-known mountain in the Vindhya Chain.

indivisible, the foremost of Destroyers; Thou hast tawny beards, bearest a bow and art fearful and endowed with terrible might.'

"'These hundred and eight sacred and excellent names, uttered by me, destroy all sins, bestow merit and give refuge to those who seek it. O Dashanana, if thou dost recite them, thou shalt be able to overcome thy foes!'"

FIFTH OF THE INTERPOLATED CHAPTERS

1st SERIES

Ravana and the Maha-Purusha

"HAVING conferred that favour on Ravana, the Grandsire, sprung from the lotus, speedily went to his own region and Ravana, having obtained the boon, departed.

"After a few days, that Scourge of the Worlds, the Rakshasa Ravana with his counsellors reached the banks of the western ocean and, on an island, a person was seen seated there alone, bright as fire, named Mahajambunada. His form was dreadful like unto the Fire of Dissolution and, beholding that highly powerful Being resembling Mahendra, the Chief of the Gods among the Celestials, or the sun among the planets, a lion among the Sharabhas, Airavata among elephants, Sumeru among mountains and Parijata among trees, Dashagriva said :—

"'Enter into combat with me!' and his eyes flickered like a cluster of planets.[1] Gnashing his teeth, he made a sound like a grinding mill and the highly powerful Dashanana amidst his counsellors, roared aloud. Thereafter with darts, Shatis, Rishtis and Pattikas, he assailed that highly effulgent Being of long arms, dread aspect, huge teeth, grim form, conch-like neck, broad chest, frog-like belly, leonine countenance, feet like unto the summit of Mount Kailasha, the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet like unto red lotuses, endowed with the swiftness of thought and the wind, terrifying, bearing a quiver, adorned with bells and chowries, encircled by flames, emitting

[1] Lit: Grahamala—A cluster of planets or meteors.

a sweet sound like a net-work of Kinkinis,[1] wearing a garland of golden flowers round his neck, noble, like unto the Rig-Veda and resembling the Anjana or Golden Mountain.

"As a lion remains unmoved by the attack of a wolf or an elephant, or Mount Sumeru by the King of the Serpents, or the vast ocean by the current of a river, neither was that great Being perturbed, but addressing Dashagriva, said :—

" ' O Vicious-minded Night-ranger, I shall soon rid thee of thy desire for combat.'

" O Rama, the might of that Being was a thousand times greater than Ravana's, which was a source of terror to the worlds. Piety and asceticism, which are the roots of attainment of everything in the world, are in his thighs, desire is in his male-organ, the Vishvadevas are at his waist and the winds at the side of his intestines ; the eight Vasus dwell in his middle, the oceans abide in his belly, the quarters are his hips, the Maruts his joints, the Pittris are at his back and the Grandsire has taken refuge in his heart. Charitable acts of making many gifts of kine, gold and land are the hair in his armpits ; the Mountains, Himalaya, Hemakuta, Mandara and Meru are his bones, the thunderbolt is in his palm, the sky in his frame, the evening rain-clouds are on his neck ; the Creator and Preserver and the Vidyadharas are his arms ; Ananta, Vasuki, Vishalaksha, Iravat, Kamvala, Asvatara, Karkotaka, Dhananjaya, the venomous Takshaka and Utpatakshaka[2] have taken shelter under his nails in order to vomit forth their poison. Fire is in his mouth, the Rudras on his shoulders ; the fortnights, months, years and seasons in his jaws, the lunar fortnight and the dark half of the month are his nostrils, the airy currents are the pores of his body, Saraswati with her Vina is in his throat, the Asvins are in his ears and the sun and moon in his two eyes.

" O Rama, all the branches of the Veda and the sacrifices, the whole galaxy of stars, sweet speech, good deeds, energy and asceticism are supported by his body in human form.

" Then that Purusha struck Ravana playfully with his hands, which were as powerful as lightning and, thus assailed, Ravana fell to the ground immediately and having put that Night-

[1] Kinkinis—Small bells.
[2] Great Serpents.

ranger to flight that great Purusha, like unto the Rig-Veda, resembling a mountain be-decked with lotus wreaths, entered the region under the earth.

" Then Ravana addressed his counsellors thus :—

" ' O Prahasta, O Shuka, O Sarana and ye other ministers, where has that Purusha suddenly gone ? Do ye tell me ! '

" Hearing the words of Ravana, the Night-rangers said :— ' That Purusha, who crusheth the pride of Devas and Danavas, has entered into that place ! '

"As Garuda swoops on a serpent so did that wicked-minded Ravana speedily approach the entrance of that cave and entered it fearlessly. Penetrating there, he beheld three warriors, dark like unto collyrium, wearing Keyuras,[1] adorned with red garlands, besmeared with sandalpaste, bedecked with diverse golden ornaments set with gems ; and he saw three crores of exalted beings, fearless, pure, radiant as fire, intent on dancing.

" Beholding them, Dashagriva was not in the least afraid but watched them gyrating whilst he stood at the entrance ; and they all resembled the Maha-Purusha, who had previously been seen by him, and all were of similar colour, dress, form and all equally endowed with energy. Then the hair of Dashagriva stood on end as he gazed upon them but, on account of the boon he had received from the Self-born, he issued out of that place alive. Thereafter he saw the Maha Purusha lying on a couch, and his dwelling, his seat and his bed were all white and costly and he slept there enveloped in flames.

"And there, with a fan in her lotus-like hands sat the Goddess Lakshmi, most beautiful in all the Three Worlds and their decoration, as it were ; chaste, adorned with celestial garlands, sprinkled with excellent sandal-paste, bedecked with rich ornaments and clad in costly robes. And the wicked Ravana, Lord of the Rakshasas, having entered there without a counsellor, beholding that chaste damsel of sweet smiles, seated on a royal throne, became filled with desire and wished to hold her by the hand, as one under the sway of death fondles a sleeping serpent.

" Beholding that Lord of the Rakshasas with a loosened garment and knowing him desirous of taking hold of her, the huge-armed Deity, sleeping, enveloped in flames, laughed aloud

[1] Keyuras—An ornament used at the waist.

and suddenly by his power began to consume Ravana, the harasser of his foes, who fell down on the earth like an uprooted tree. Beholding that Rakshasa fallen, the Purusha addressed him saying :—

" ' Rise up, O Foremost of the Rakshasas, thou shalt not meet with death to-day ! Thou shalt live protected by the Grandsire's boon. Do thou therefore go hence without fear, O Ravana, thy death is not yet decreed ! '

" Regaining consciousness after a while, Ravana was seized with fear and being thus addressed, that enemy of the Gods rose up, his hair standing on end and said to that highly resplendent Deity :—

" ' Who art thou endowed with great energy and like unto the Fire of Dissolution ? Say who art thou, O God and from whence hast thou come hither ? '

" Being thus accosted by the wicked-minded Ravana, the God, smiling, replied in accents as deep as the muttering of clouds, saying :—

" ' What hast thou to do with me, O Dashagriva, thou shalt be slain ere long ! '

" Being thus addressed, the Ten-necked Rakshasa, with joined palms, said :—

" ' On account of Brahma's boon, I shall not tread the path of death ; there is none born amongst men or Gods who can equal me or, in virtue of his prowess, disregard the Grandsire's boon. His words may never prove vain nor can any, howsoever he exert himself, prove them to be false ; I do not see any in the Three Worlds who could render his boon to me void. O Great God, I am immortal, I do not fear Thee and even were I to meet with death, may it be through thee and none other, O Lord; death at Thy hands will bring me glory and renown ! '

" Then Ravana endowed with dreadful prowess saw the Three Worlds with all the animate and inanimate creatures within the body of the Deity. The Adityas, the Maruts, the Sadhyas, the Vasus, the Twin Ashvins, the Rudras, the Pittris, Yama, Kuvera, the seas, mountains, rivers, all the branches of learning and of the Veda, Fire, the planets, the stars, the sky, the Siddhas, Gandharvas, Charanas and the Maha Rishis conversant with the knowledge of the Veda, Garuda, the Nagas,

the other Gods, Yakshas, Daityas and Rakshasas were all seen in their subtle forms in the limbs of that Purusha lying there."

On this, the virtuous-souled Rama said to Agastya, the foremost of Munis :—" O Lord, tell me who was that Maha Purusha on that island ? Who were those hundreds and thousands of beings ? Who is the Purusha who humbles the pride of Daityas and Danavas ?"

Hearing Rama's words, Shri Agastya answered :—

" O Thou existing eternally, O God of Gods, hearken and I will tell thee. That Purusha on the island was the illustrious Kapila and all those who were dancing are the Deities equalling that intelligent Kapila in energy and power. And that Rakshasa, bent on sin, was not looked on by Him with a wrathful glance, therefore he was not immediately reduced to ashes, but Ravana, who resembled a mountain, with his person pierced, fell to the ground. As a crafty man penetrates a secret, so did that Purusha pierce Ravana's person with his arrow-like words.

" Thereafter that Rakshasa of great prowess, having regained his senses after a long time, returned to where his counsellors were."

CHAPTER 24

Ravana carries off a number of Women and is cursed by them

"WHILE Ravana of perverse soul was returning in the height of joy, continuing his journey, he bore away the youthful daughters of Kings, Rishis, Gods and Danavas. Whenever he met a young maiden of remarkable beauty, he slew all her kinsfolk and friends and took her into his chariot. Thus the daughters of Pannagas, Rakshasas, Asuras, men and Yakshas were compelled to enter his equipage and all these unfortunate beings, under the sway of fear, in their grief, shed burning tears like unto fire.

" The youthful daughters of Nagas, Gandharvas, great Rishis and Danavas lamented in their hundreds in the aerial Car Pushpaka, and those charming women with long tresses, graceful limbs and faces as radiant as the full moon, with their rounded breasts gleaming like an altar and decorated with diamonds,

their hips like unto the axles of a chariot, who resembled the consorts of the Gods with their elegant waists and their complexion like unto refined gold, were mad with fear and grief. The breath of their sighing scorched the ear, lending the Pushpaka Chariot the appearance of a fire ceremony that is lit on all sides.

" Fallen into the power of Dashagriva, those women were overcome with affliction and the sadness expressed in their looks and mien caused them to resemble black antelopes that have become a prey to a lion. And one asked herself ' Is he not going to devour me ? ' whilst another, in the despair that overwhelmed her, thought ' He is about to slay me ! ' Recollecting their mothers, fathers, husbands and brothers, plunged in grief and affliction, those women, thus assembled began to lament, saying :—

" 'Alas ! What will become of my son without me ? What will become of my mother ? ' And, submerged in an ocean of grief, they cried ' What can I do now far from my lord ? O Death, I call upon thee to bear me away for affliction is now my portion. Have I committed some misdeed formerly in another body ? '

" Then all those wretched women, sunk in an ocean of despair exclaimed :—' We see no end to our misery ! Woe unto the world ! Assuredly none is more vile than the mighty Ravana, since under his blows our helpless consorts have perished, as stars disappear on the rising of the sun. Ah ! That powerful Rakshasa takes delight in devising the means of our destruction ! Alas ! He gives himself up to evil without scruple, he is indifferent to every condemnation ; till now none has been able to put an end to the exploits of this wicked wretch, yet it is a great sin to lay hands on other men's wives ; this Rakshasa is the vilest of all since he seeks enjoyment with them. Because of this, a woman will be the cause of the death of this wicked being ! '

" When those virtuous and noble women had uttered these words, celestial gongs sounded and a shower of blossom fell. Cursed by his captives, Dashagriva seemed to lose all his power and glory and, hearing those women, who were chaste and devoted to their consorts, lamenting in this wise, that bull among the Rakshasas became distracted.

"Thereafter he made his entry into the City of Lanka to the acclamations of the rangers of the night and, at that time, the fierce Rakshasi, who was able to change her form at will, the sister of Ravana, suddenly sank down on the earth before him, and Ravana, helping her to rise and comforting her, said :—

"'O Dear One, what is this? Why dost thou seek speech with me so urgently?'

"Thereupon, her eyes inflamed and suffused with tears, she said to him :—

"'O King, I have been widowed through thy ruthless conduct! O Lord, thy valour in combat has cut down those Daityas called Kalakeyas to the number of fourteen thousand and, in addition, my valiant lord who was dearer to me than life itself. He was slain by thee, his foe, a brother in name only and, by thee, I myself am slain, O Prince, thou my kinsman! From now, I shall bear the title of widow through thy fault! Was it not for thee to spare a brother-in-law in the fight?'

"Hearing those indignant words from his sister, Dashagriva, in order to appease her, spoke soothingly, saying :—

"'Dry thy tears, my dear sister and fear nothing! I shall load thee with gifts, homage and favours. In the heat of battle, being carried away by a desire to triumph, I loosed my shafts without being able to distinguish mine own people from others and did not recognize my brother-in-law whom I struck in the height of the conflict. That is how thy consort fell under my blows in the fight. O My Sister, whatever presents itself at this time, I will do for thy pleasure. It is for thee to go and live near thy kinsman, Khara, who enjoys sovereignty. Fourteen thousand Rakshasas will be made subject to that powerful Prince in the expeditions and distribution of spoils. There, that son of the sister of thy mother, thy cousin Khara, the Ranger of the Night, will ever be obedient to thy commands. Let that warrior speedily go and guard the Dandaka Forest; Dushana shall be his commander; great is his valour. The courageous Khara shall ever obey thy will and be the leader of the titans able to change their form at pleasure.'

"Having spoken thus, Dashagriva placed an army of fourteen thousand Rakshasas, full of valour, under Khara's command. Surrounded by all those titans of redoubtable appearance,

Khara set out fearlessly at once to the Dandaka Forest. There he established his authority without hindrance and Shurpanakha dwelt near him in the forest."

CHAPTER 25

Dashagriva allies himself to Madhu

" DASHAGRIVA, having given over that redoubtable army to Khara and consoled his sister, became master of himself once more and was freed from anxiety.

" Thereafter that powerful Indra among the Rakshasas penetrated into the marvellous Nikumbhila Grove where he beheld hundreds of sacrificial posts and altars and, as if blazing in brilliance, a sacrifice was being performed.

" There, clad in a black antelope skin, holding a coconut loshta and staff, he beheld his own son, Meghanada of dread aspect. Approaching him, the Lord of Lanka, clasping him in his arms, enquired of him :—

" ' What art thou doing here, O Child, tell me truly ! '

" Then that excellent Twice-born of rigid penances, Ushanas,[1] in order that the sacrifice should prove auspicious,[2] answered Ravana, saying :—

" ' I shall tell thee myself, O King, listen to all that has taken place. Seven sacrifices with countless preparatory rites have been undertaken by thy son, the Agnisthoma, Ashvamedha, Bahusvarnaka, Rajasuya, Gomedha and the Vaishnava and, having engaged in the Maheshvara sacrifice, difficult for men to undertake, thy son, on its completion, received gifts from the Lord of Creatures Himself : a stable and celestial chariot coursing at will in the sky, the power of illusion by which darkness is created on the field of battle so that even the Gods and Asuras can no longer find their way, and, in order to exterminate the foe in combat, O King, he has also been granted two inexhaustible

[1] Ushanas—another name of the Sage Sukra.
[2] Meghanada having taken the vow of silence till the ceremony was completed.

quivers, a bow that no weapon can shatter and a powerful arrow. Having received these gifts, thy son, O Dashanana, wishes to meet with thee on the completion of the sacrifice and will soon present himself before thee.'

" Then Dashagriva said :—

" ' This is not well done, since our enemy, Indra, has been worshipped with these offerings. However, what is done is done and doubtless thou wilt acquire merit thereby, let us now return, My Friend, and enter our abode.'

" Thereafter Dashagriva with his son and Bibishana returned to his dwelling and caused all the captives, who were crying and sobbing, to be brought down ; and the virtuous Bibishana, being aware of his intention regarding those women, who were noble and veritable pearls, the offspring of the Gods, Danavas and Rakshasas, said to his brother :—

" ' It is practices such as these, which thou dost follow with deliberate intention despite thy knowledge of the causes of destruction of beings, that are ruinous to thy good name, thy family and fortune ! After ill-treating their relatives, thou hast carried away these high-born women, whilst Madhu affronts thee by carrying off Kumbhinasi,'

" Then Ravana answered :—' I was not aware of this ; who is this Madhu of whom thou speakest ? ' and Bibishana replied to his brother indignantly and said :—

" ' Learn the consequences of thine evil karma ! The elder brother of our maternal grandfather, Sumali, that virtuous old man named Malyavan, Ranger of the Night, the father of our mother, is the grandfather of Kumbhinasi, so that we are virtually her brothers. She has been borne away by Madhu, a Rakshasa of superior power, while thy son was engaged in the sacrifice and I was bathing in the waters. Kumbhakarna, on his side, was still under the influence of sleep. Having slain the aged ministers, that foremost of night-rangers instantly carried away the princess most ruthlessly, though she was in the precincts of the inner apartments. Though these ill-tidings were known to us, we did not slay the ravisher since it is imperative that a young girl be provided with a consort by her brothers. This is the fruit of thy perverse and wicked conduct which, as thou seest, thou art now reaping in this world itself.'

"Hearing these words of Bibishana's, that Indra of the Rakshasas, Ravana, wrought up through the wickedness of his soul, like unto an ocean with surging waves, his eyes red with anger, said :—

"'Let my chariot be harnessed speedily, let my warriors stand ready with my brother Kumbhakarna and the foremost of the rangers of the night in their conveyances heaped with every weapon. To-day, having slain Madhu, who dares to defy Ravana, I shall go to the region of the Gods, burning to fight, surrounded by my companions.'

"Four thousand Akshauhinis of the foremost of the titans, armed from head to foot with various weapons, instantly rushed out, eager for hand to hand encounter, and Indrajita marched in the advance guard with his warriors. Ravana occupied the centre and Kumbhakarna the rearguard. As for the virtuous Bibishana, he remained in Lanka, faithful to his duty. All the other warriors advanced against Madhu's city and they were mounted on mules, buffalo, fiery steeds, porpoises and great serpents, covering the sky and, beholding Ravana on the march, hundreds of Daityas, who were at emnity with the Gods, followed him.

"Meanwhile Dashanana, having reached Madhupura, entered it, yet he did not find Madhu there but his own sister, who, paying obeisance to him, with a deep bow cast herself at his feet, for Kumbhinasi feared the Lord of the Rakshasas.

"Then he, raising her up, said to her :—

"'Do not tremble!' and the King of the Rakshasas added 'What dost thou desire of me?' Then she replied :—'O Long-armed Prince, if I find favour with thee, then, O Proud Hero, do not slay my lord; it is not fitting to reduce women of nobility to such affliction. Of all ill-fortune, to become a widow is the greatest. Be true to thy word, O Indra of Monarchs, and receive my supplication with favour. Thou hast thyself said "Thou hast nothing to fear!"'

"Then Ravana, in cheerful tones, answered his sister, who stood near him, saying :—'Where is thy husband, tell me quickly! I shall go with him to conquer the region of the Gods. I shall not slay Madhu because of my tender affection for thee.'

"At these words, Kumbhinasi roused her lord, that Ranger of

the Night, who was sleeping profoundly and, in the height of joy, said to him :—

" ' My powerful brother, Dashagriva, is here, who desires to vanquish the world of the Gods ; he has chosen thee as his ally, therefore go, O Titan, with thy kinsmen and lend him thy strong support. It is fitting that thou shouldst assist him in this matter on account of his magnanimity and the honour which he has paid thee.'

" On hearing this, Madhu answered, ' So be it ! ' and beholding Ravana, the Lord of the Rakshasas, he approached him according to tradition and paid him due tribute.

" Thus honoured, Dashagriva passed a night in Madhu's abode and then started on his way. Having reached Kailasha, that mountain that served as Vaishravana's retreat, the Indra among the Rakshasas, like unto Mahendra, caused his army to set up camp."

CHAPTER 26

Nalakuvara curses Ravana

" It was on Kailasha, the sun having withdrawn behind the Astachala Range, that Dashagriva, full of vigour, chose to encamp the army.

" When the immaculate moon rose over the mountain with a splendour equal to his, the vast host that composed the army, furnished with diverse weapons, lay sleeping.

" The mighty Ravana, resting on the summit of the mountain, surveyed the splendour of the forests in the light of the moon, the flaming Karnikara Woods, the Kadambas and Vakulas, pools covered with lotuses in bloom, the waters of the Mandakini, the Champaka, Ashoka, Punnaga, Mandara, Cuta, Patala, Lodhra, Priyanga, Arjuna, Ketaka, Tagara, Narikela, Priyala, Panasa and other trees. Sweet-throated Kinneras, transported with love, sang melodies that ravished the soul with delight ; there the Vidyadharas, intoxicated, their eyes inflamed, diverted themselves with their consorts. Like unto a carillon of bells, sweet music was heard from the troops of Apsaras who were

singing in Dhanada's abode. Trees, shaken by the wind, covered the mountain with a shower of blossom, distilling the perfume of honey and mead, and a balmy breeze, laden with the enchanting aroma of nectar and pollen, blew, enhancing Ravana's voluptuous desire. The songs, the myriad flowers, the freshness of the breeze, the beauty of the mountain in the night, the moon at its zenith, threw Ravana, that mighty warrior, into a ferment of passion.

" Meanwhile, Rambha, loveliest of nymphs adorned with celestial ornaments, was on her way to a sacred festival and her face was like unto the full moon, her limbs smeared with sandal-paste, her hair sown with Mandara flowers, and she was garlanded with celestial blooms. Her eyes were beautiful, her waist high, adorned with a jewelled belt, and her hips were shapely, the gift of love as it were. She was enchanting with her countenance embellished with the marks of flowers[1] that bloom in the six seasons and, in her beauty, stateliness, radiance and splendour, she resembled Shri. Swathed in a dark blue cloth, like unto a rain cloud, her countenance bright as the moon, her eyebrows resplendent arches, her hips like the tapering trunks of elephants, her hands like two fresh buds, under Ravana's eyes she passed through the ranks of the army.

" Thereupon he, rising, pierced by the shafts of love, with his hand stayed the course of that nymph who was abashed and, smiling, enquired of her :—

" ' Where art thou going, O Lady of lovely hips ? What good fortune art thou pursuing ? For whom has this auspicious hour dawned ? Who is about to enjoy thee ? Who, this day, will quaff the elixir of thy lips exhaling the perfume of the lotus that rivals nectar or ambrosia ? Who will caress those two breasts like unto twin goblets, rounded, blooming, that touch each other, O Youthful Woman ? Who will stroke thy large hips shining like refined gold covered with dazzling garlands, celestial to look upon ? Is it Shakra or Vishnu or the Twin Ashvins ? O Lovely One, if thou dost pass me by in order to seek out another, it will not be a gracious act ! Rest here, O Lady of lovely limbs, on this enchanting mountain side, it is I, who

[1] It was customary for women to use flower dyes to trace patterns on their skin.

exercise dominion over the Three Worlds, who with joined palms address this humble request to thee, I, Dashanana, Lord of the Three Worlds and their Ordainer, therefore grant my request.'

"Hearing these words, Rambha, trembling, with joined palms, replied :—' Look on me with favour, it is not fitting that thou shouldst address me thus, thou who art my superior! Rather is it thy duty to protect me from others if I should be in danger of suffering violence at their hands, for apart from duty, I am virtually thy daughter-in-law, I speak truth!'

"Then Dashagriva answered Rambha, who had prostrated herself at his feet and whose hair stood on end merely on beholding him, and said :—

"'Hadst thou been my son's consort, thou wouldst in effect be my daughter-in-law!' Thereupon she answered :—

"'Truly it is so, by law, I am the wife of thy son and dearer to him than his life's breath, O Bull amongst the Rakshasas; he is the son of thy brother Vaishravana, who is renowned in the Three Worlds, and is named Nalakuvara, an ascetic in virtue, a warrior in respect of valour and, in wrath he resembles Agni; in forbearance he is like unto the earth! I was going to meet that son of the Guardian of the Worlds; it is for his sake that I am adorned with these ornaments so that he and no other should enjoy me. For these reasons, let me go hence, O King, O Subduer of thy Foes, for that virtuous prince awaits me impatiently. It is not for thee to thwart his desires, let me go! Do thou follow the path of the virtuous, O Bull among the Rakshasas! It is for me to pay thee homage and for thee to protect me!'

"Thus did she address Dashagriva, who answered her in smooth accents, saying :—

"'Thou hast said thou art my daughter-in-law! For those who have but one husband, this argument is valid but in Devaloka, the Gods have established a law that is said to be eternal, that Apsaras have no appointed consorts nor are the Gods monogamous!'

"Thus speaking, the Rakshasa, who had stationed himself on the mountain ridge, inflamed with desire, ravished Rambha and, when she was released from his embrace, her garlands and her

ornaments spoiled and torn away, she resembled a river where a great elephant, disporting himself, muddying the waters, has borne away the banks. Her hair in disorder, her hands clenched, like unto a creeper with its flowers shaken by the wind, trembling with terror, she sought out Nalakuvara and, with joined palms, fell at his feet.

" Then he enquired of her saying :—

" ' What is this, O Blessed One ? Why dost thou prostrate thyself at my feet ? '

" Thereupon she, sighing deeply, trembling, with joined palms began to tell him everything and said :—

" ' O Lord, this night, Dashagriva scaled the Trivishtapa Peak while he was encamped on that mountain with his army and I was observed by him as I came to meet thee, O Conqueror of Thy Foes ! That Rakshasa seized hold of me and questioned me saying " To whom dost thou belong ? " Then I told him all, verily the whole truth, but he, intoxicated with desire, would not listen to me when I pleaded with him, saying " I am thy daughter-in-law ! " Refusing to listen to mine entreaties, he assaulted me ruthlessly ! This is mine only fault, O Thou of firm vows, thou shouldst therefore pardon me. O Friend, verily there is no equality of strength between man and woman ! '

" These words filled the son of Vaishravana with indignation and hearing of this supreme outrage, he entered into meditation and having ascertained the truth, the son of Vaishravana, his eyes inflamed with anger, instantly took water in his hand and sprinkled his whole person in accord with tradition, after which he pronounced a terrible curse on that Indra of the Rakshasas, saying :—

" ' Since, despite thy lack of love for him, he ravished thee thus brutally, O Blessed One, on this account he will never be able to approach another youthful woman unless she shares his love ; if, carried away by lust, he does violence to any woman who does not love him, his head will split into seven pieces.'

" Having uttered this curse like unto a scorching flame, celestial gongs resounded and a shower of flowers fell from the sky. All the Gods with the Grandsire at their head were filled with joy, conversant as they were with the whole course of the world and the future death of the Rakshasa.

" When Dashagriva learnt of the curse, however, his hair stood on end and he ceased to indulge in uniting himself with those who had no affection for him. Thereafter, among those who had been borne away by him and remained faithful to their consorts, there was great rejoicing when they heard of the curse uttered by Nalakuvara, which was pleasing to their heart."

CHAPTER 27

The Fight between the Gods and the Rakshasas. The Death of Sumali

" HAVING crossed Mount Kailasha with his infantry and cavalry, the extremely powerful Dashanana reached Indraloka and, like an ocean that overflows, the tumult of the Rakshasa army, approaching on all sides, reverberated in Devaloka.

" Hearing of Ravana's advent, Indra trembled on his throne and addressed the assembled Gods, Adityas, Vasus, Rudras, Sadhyas and Hosts of Maruts, saying :—

" ' Prepare to fight against the wicked-minded Ravana ! '

"At Shakra's command, the Gods, his equals in war, endowed with great valour, boldly armed themselves for combat. Mahendra however, who feared Ravana extremely, profoundly perturbed, sought out Vishnu and spoke to him thus :—

" ' O Vishnu, how shall I withstand the Rakshasa Ravana, whose strength is formidable and who, alas, is advancing to attack me ? He owes his power to the boon he has received from Brahma and to nought else and the words uttered by that Lotus-born God must be carried into effect ! Do Thou grant me such assistance again which Thou didst accord me when I destroyed Namuchi, Vritra, Bali, Naraka and Shambara ! O Lord, O God of Gods, Slayer of Madhu, there is no refuge save Thee in the Three Worlds with all the animate and inanimate beings. Thou art the blessed Narayana, the eternal lotus-born One ; Thou art the Sustainer of the Worlds and of myself, Shakra, the King of the Gods ; Thou hast created the Three Worlds with all the moving and unmoving objects and, at the end of the world cycle, all is withdrawn into Thee, O Bhagawat ;

therefore, O God of Gods, tell me truly if Thou wilt arm Thyself with sword and discus in order to enter into combat with Ravana?'

"Thus spoke Shakra, the King of the Gods, and that sovereign Lord, Narayana, answered him saying :—

"'Fear not! Hear me! On account of the boon he has received which renders him invincible, this wicked wretch may not be overcome by the Gods and Asuras combined! Intoxicated with his power, that Rakshasa, accompanied by his son, will certainly achieve a great feat. As for thy request, that I should enter into combat with him, I shall certainly not meet the Rakshasa Ravana in fight, for Vishnu never leaves the battlefield without laying his adversary low; it is not possible to accomplish this to-day since Ravana is protected by the boon, but I swear to thee, O King of the Gods, Shatakratu, that I myself will become the cause of that titan's death. The Gods shall rejoice when I make known to them that the hour has struck! I speak the truth, O Mighty Lord of the Gods, Consort of Sachi, therefore fight with the assistance of the Gods and banish all fear!'

"Then the Rudras with the Adityas, Vasus, Maruts and the two Ashvins, assembling, advanced to meet the Rakshasa. At that instant, the end of the night having come, a great clamour arose from Ravana's army as they took the field on all sides, and those valiant warriors, wrought up with excitement, on seeing each other, eagerly rushed on the foe. Thereafter confusion was sown amongst the ranks of the Daivatas by the presence of that indomitable and vast army in the forefront of battle and a terrible struggle ensued between the Gods, Danavas and Rakshasas, amidst a fearful tumult and under a hail of missiles of every kind.

"Then those valiant Rakshasas of grim aspect grouped themselves round Ravana in the fight, and Maricha, Prahasta, Mahaparshwa, Mahodara, Akampana, Nikumbha, Shuka, Sarana Dhumaketu, Mahadamshtra, Ghatodara, Jambumalin, Maharada Virupaksha, Saptaghna, Yajnakopa, Durmukha, Dushana, Khara, Trishiras, Karaviraksha, Suryashastru, Mahakaya and Atikaya, Devantaka, Narantaka and the highly powerful Sumali, Ravana's maternal grandfather, all those warriors, encircling their valiant leader, entered the battlefield.

"And with whetted shafts, enraged, he began to assail the Celestial Host, as a tempest scatters the clouds; and the forces of the Gods were overthrown by the rangers of the night, O Rama, and scattered in all directions, like unto a herd of deer before lions.

" Meantime the courageous Savitra, the eighth Vasu, entered the battlefield surrounded by soldiers, full of martial ardour, furnished with every kind of weapon and he began to sow terror in the enemy ranks when he appeared in the midst of the fight. Thereafter the two Adityas, full of valour and intrepidity, Twastar and Pushan, at the head of a division, entered the lists in their turn, whereupon a fearful struggle ensued between the Rakshasas and the Gods, who never retreated in battle and were jealous of their good name. And the Celestials there present fell in hundreds of thousands under the blows of the Rakshasas, who were formidable and armed with weapons of every kind. On their side, the Gods, redoubtable in their vigour and extreme valour, with the help of faultless arrows, despatched their foes to the region of Yama. Thereupon O Rama, the Rakshasa Sumali, fully armed, hurled himself on the foe in fury and scattered the entire Celestial Host with his innumerable and penetrating missiles, as a violent hurricane, the clouds, and with formidable blows from spears and javelins, decimated them, so that the Gods were unable to stand.

" The Immortals having thus been put to flight by Sumali, the eighth Vasu, Savitra, enraged, stood fast, and surrounded by his forces, full of energy and courage stayed the onrush of that Ranger of the Night, whereupon a fearful duel, causing the hair to stand on end, ensued between Sumali and the Vasu, both warriors who did not know what it was to retreat in battle. Under the powerful missiles of his adversary, the chariot of the Rakshasa, that was harnessed to serpents, suddenly fell to pieces; and having shattered his chariot in the fight with his countless darts, the Vasu seized hold of his mace with the intention of slaying him. Brandishing that weapon with its flaming point, resembling the Rod of Death, Savitra brought it down on Sumali's head and the mace fell upon him with the flash of a meteor, so that it appeared like a great thunderbolt hurled by Indra on a mountain. Thereafter nothing of the Rakshasa

could be seen, neither bone nor head nor flesh, for that mace, by overthrowing him on the battle field, had reduced him to dust.

"Then the Rakshasas, beholding that Sumali had fallen in the fight, questioning each other, all fled, routed by that Vasu who had overcome them."

CHAPTER 28

The Duel between Indra and Ravana

"SEEING Sumali overthrown and reduced to dust by Vasu and beholding his army in flight harassed by the Gods, the valiant son of Ravana, whose voice resembled the muttering of a thunder-cloud, provoked, rallied the Rakshasas and, mounted on an excellent chariot that coursed wheresoere he willed, that great warrior hurled himself on the Celestial Host. Like unto a fire that consumes the forests, he entered the field armed with every weapon, and when the Gods beheld him, a general stampede followed, none daring to face such a combatant. Then Shakra stayed all those fugitives by admonishing them thus :—

"'Neither should you tremble nor flee, return and fight, O Ye Gods! Behold my son, who is invincible, entering the lists!'

"At that moment the son of Shakra, the illustrious God Jayanta, mounted on his chariot, that was marvellously constructed, turned towards the battlefield. Thereafter the Gods, surrounding the son of Sachi, turned back to fight Ravani and a well-matched contest ensued between Gods and Rakshasas. Then Ravani loosed his golden shafts on Gomukha, the son of Matali, Jayanta's charioteer, whilst Sachi's son, in his turn, in wrath harassed Ravani's driver on every side. His eyes dilated with the fury that possessed him, the mighty Ravani covered his opponents with darts and thereafter, in his ire, he let fly innumerable extremely sharp weapons on the Celestial Host and Shataghnis, pikes, javelins, maces, swords, axes and huge crags were all discharged by him upon them. Then the worlds became agitated and while Indrajita decimated the enemy battalions the quarters were enveloped in darkness.

"Meanwhile the army of the Gods deserted Jayanta and, in

confusion broke their ranks, being overwhelmed by the shafts of their rival.

" Rakshasas and Gods could not distinguish each other and the forces thrown into disorder on every side, fled in all directions.

" The Gods struck the Gods and the Rakshasas the Rakshasas, bewildered by the darkness that enveloped them, whilst others ran away. At that instant, a warrior, full of valour, named Puloman, the foremost of the Daityas, seized Jayanta and bore him away. Taking hold of his daughter's son, he dived into the sea for he was his maternal grandfather and Sachi's sire.

" Learning of Jayanta's disappearance, the Gods, cast down and discouraged, dispersed. Then Ravani, enraged, emitting loud cries, surrounded by his forces rushed on the Gods.

" Not beholding his son and observing the flight of the Gods, the Lord of the Celestials said to Matali :—' Bring me my chariot ! ' and Matali harnessed the divine, powerful and huge car, bringing it in all haste to his master. Thereupon, above the chariot and before him, clouds, riven by lightning, driven by the tempest emitted formidable mutterings and the Gandharvas struck up every kind of musical instrument while troops of Apsaras danced at the departure of the King of the Gods, and Rudras, Vasus, Adityas, the two Ashvins, as also the Hosts of the Maruts, armed with every kind of weapon, formed the escort of the Lord of the Thirty, as he started out.

"As Shakra advanced, a bitter wind blew, the sun ceased to shine and a great meteor fell. At the same time, the courageous Dashagriva, burning with ardour, himself ascended the divine Pushpaka Car constructed by Vishvakarma and harnessed to huge serpents, who, as it were causing the hair to stand on end, consumed everything with the wind of their breath.

" Daityas and titans surrounded the celestial car that was rolling towards the field of battle, advancing to meet Mahendra, and Dashagriva, having dismissed his son, took his place himself, whilst Ravani left the field and remained a tranquil witness.

" Then the struggle was resumed between the Rakshasas and the Gods, who like unto clouds, caused a shower of missiles to fall in the fight. And the wicked Kumbhakarna, brandishing weapons of every kind, came there, O King, unaware with whom

the conflict was taking place; using his teeth, his feet, his hands, lances, picks, mallets or anything whatsoever in order to assail the Gods in his fury. Having attacked the formidable Rudras, it went ill with that Ranger of the Night, who, in an instant, was riddled with wounds; and the army of the Rakshasas, hard pressed by the Gods, assisted by the Hosts of Maruts and armed with every weapon, were completely routed and, in the struggle, some fell on the earth mutilated and palpitating, whilst others remained clinging to their mounts. Some titans twined their arms round their chariots, elephants, donkeys, buffalo, serpents, horses, porpoise and boars with heads of goblins, where they lay motionless, whereupon the Gods pierced them with their shafts and thus they died. The sight of all those Rakshasas lying here and there in the sleep of death on that vast battlefield looked passing strange and, at the forefront of the battle, a river flowed, blood being its waters, weapons its crocodiles, in which vultures and crows abounded.

"Meantime Dashagriva, seething with anger on seeing his army entirely overthrown by the Gods, hurled himself with one bound into that sea of warriors, slaying the Celestials in the fight and challenging Shakra himself.

"Thereupon Shakra stretched his great bow that gave forth a thunderous noise and, when he drew it, the twanging of that weapon caused the quarters to resound. Then Indra, bending that great bow, let fall his flaming arrows like unto fire or the sun on Ravana's head and, on his side, that powerful titan covered his rival with a hail of arrows loosed from his bow and both showered down missiles on every side so that nothing could be distinguished and the whole firmament was enveloped in darkness."

CHAPTER 29

Ravani takes Indra captive

"IN the darkness that had supervened, the Gods and the Rakshasas engaged in a terrible struggle, slaying each other in the intoxication of their strength and, in the obscurity that enveloped

them like a great veil, the supremely intrepid Indra, Ravana and Meghanada alone were not deluded.

" Beholding that army wholly annihilated, Ravana was suddenly seized with violent rage and emitted a great roar. In his fury that invincible warrior addressed his driver, who stood near with the chariot, saying, ' Take me through the enemy ranks from one end to the other! This very day, with mine innumerable and powerful weapons, all the Gods in my path will be despatched by me to the region of Yama. I myself shall slay Indra, Dhanada, Varuna, Yama and all the Gods and shall soon strike them down and trample them under my feet. Do not delay, drive the car on speedily, and again I say to thee, " Drive through the enemy ranks from end to end! We are now in the Nandana Gardens therefore take me to the Udaya Mountain! " '

"At this command, the charioteer drove his steeds, who were as swift as thought, through the enemy ranks.

" Divining Ravana's intention, Shakra, standing in his chariot on the battlefield, addressed the Gods, whose sovereign he was, saying :—

" ' O Ye Gods, hear me, this is what I consider expedient— Dashagriva should without delay be captured alive. That extremely powerful Rakshasa will enter our ranks in his chariot with the speed of the wind, like unto an ocean whose waves are overflowing on the day of high tide. He may not be slain for a special boon protects him but seek to make him captive in the struggle! It was by taking Bali prisoner that I was able to enjoy the Three Worlds; for this reason let us do the same to this wicked wretch.'

" Thus speaking, Shakra left Ravana and went to another part of the field, sowing terror among the Rakshasas whom he assailed, O Great King.

" While the indefatigable Dashagriva went to the left, Shatakratu penetrated the right wing of his adversary's forces. Having advanced a hundred leagues, the King of the Rakshasas covered the entire Host of the Gods with a shower of arrows.

" Seeing the carnage that was being created in his army, the intrepid Shakra stayed Dashanana by encircling him, whereupon

the Danavas and Rakshasas beholding Ravana overcome by Shakra, cried out 'Alas! We are lost!'

"Standing in his chariot, Ravani, who was transported with rage, penetrated into the ranks of the redoubtable Celestial Host and routed the army by resorting to the power of illusion that had been conferred on him by Pashupati. Then, leaving the Gods aside, he rushed on Shakra himself, and the highly energetic Mahendra did not observe the son of his adversary. The Gods, however, whose strength was immeasurable, severed Ravani's armour, even wounding him, but he remained unperturbed and with his excellent shafts pierced Matali who was advancing towards him, covering Mahendra afresh with a hail of missiles.

"Thereupon Shakra descended from his chariot dismissing his charioteer, and mounting Airavata, he pursued Ravani, who had made himself invisible through his magic power, but he, springing into the sky, assailed him with arrows. Seeing that Indra was exhausted, Ravani bound him by his magic and led him to the side where his own army was. Beholding Mahendra borne away by force from the fight, all the Celestials enquired 'What has taken place? One cannot discern the magician who has triumphed over Shakra, that victorious warrior, who, by the aid of magic, has carried Indra away despite his skill.' Then all the divisions of the Gods, in their wrath, overwhelmed Ravana with a hail of shafts and forced him to retreat, whilst he, worn out in the encounter with the Adityas and the Vasus was unable to continue the fight.

"Beholding his sire harassed and assailed with shafts in the encounter, Ravani, remaining invisible in the struggle, said to him:—

"'Come, O Dear Father, let us give up the fight, know that victory has been obtained, therefore abandon thy feverish activity! The King of the Gods and of the Three Worlds has been taken captive! The Gods have seen the pride, which inspired their forces, humbled. Enjoy the Three Worlds at thy pleasure, having overcome the foe by thy valour, why fatigue thyself further with combat?'

"Hearing Ravani's words, the battalions of the Gods and the Immortals deprived of Shakra, who had led them, gave up the

fight. And the all-powerful enemy of the Gods, the illustrious Sovereign of the Rakshasas, thus entreated to cease from further fighting by his son, whose dear voice he recognized, answered him with deference, saying :—

" ' Thy valour is equal to the greatest of heroes, thou in whom my family and race find their increase, O Prince, since this day thou hast overcome the one whose strength is immeasurable, he, the Sovereign of the Gods. Ascend Vasava's chariot and proceed towards the city with thine army as an escort ; I, on my side, with my companions, will follow joyfully with all speed.'

" On this the valiant Ravani, surrounded by his forces with the Chief of the Gods in chains, set out towards his abode, thereafter dismissing the Rakshasas who had fought in the campaign."

CHAPTER 30

Telling of the Curse pronounced by the Sage Gautama on Shakra

" WHEN the all-powerful Mahendra had been overcome by the son of Ravana, the Gods with Prajapati at their head went to Lanka and, approaching Dashagriva, who was surrounded by his brothers, Prajapati, from the sky where he was stationed, addressed him in conciliatory tones, saying :—

" ' My Dear Ravana, I am pleased with thy son's bearing on the battlefield ! Assuredly in valour and heroism, he is thine equal if not thy superior ! Thou hast overcome the Three Worlds by thy prowess and fulfilled thy vow ; I am gratified with thee and thy son. He, standing there full of strength and energy, will become renowned in the worlds under the name of Indrajita[1] and that Rakshasa, with whose support the Gods have been brought under thy subjection, shall become powerful and invincible. O Long-armed Hero, do thou release Mahendra, the Chastiser of Paka and say what the inhabitants of heaven shall bestow on thee as ransom ? '

" Then that victorious warrior, Indrajita, answered saying:—

" ' O Lord, if that God is to be set free, then grant me immortality ! '

[1] Conqueror of Indra.

"Thereupon the all-powerful Prajapati replied to Meghanada, saying :—

"'There is none immortal on earth, whether it be beast, bird or any other mighty being.'

"Hearing this irrevocable decree of the Grandsire, the Lord, Indra's vanquisher, the courageous Meghanada, said to him :—

"'Then hear me, and may it come to pass in this wise on the release of Shatakratu! This is my desire, I, who constantly worship Pavaka with oblations and mantras and who delight in fighting and overcoming my foes, let the chariot of Vibhabasu harnessed to steeds, be placed at my service and may death be unable to strike me down when I am mounted upon it! This is my request, but, should I engage in combat without having completed my prayers and offered my oblations to the God of Fire, then may I perish! All, O Lord, seek immortality by means of penances; I wish to acquire immortality through valour!'

"'Let it be so' said the Blessed Grandsire and thereafter Shakra was set free by Indrajita and the Gods returned to their own abode.

"Meantime, O Rama, the wretched Indra, his glory dimmed, his heart full of anxiety, was plunged in melancholy and, beholding him in that plight, the Grandsire enquired of him, saying :—

"'O Shatakratu, didst thou not formerly commit some great sin? O Chief of the Gods, O Lord, when in my wisdom I created men, they were all possessed of the same colour, shape, language and appearance, there was no difference between them in form or aspect, nevertheless my mind was pre-occupied when I reflected on those beings and, I created a woman as distinct from them, modifying each of the male characteristics. Thus I made a female, who on occount of the grace of her limbs became known as Ahalya; "Hala" meaning ugly, from which "Halya" is derived, and she in whom "Halya" does not appear is named Ahalya; this was the name I called her. When I fashioned that woman, O Chief of the Gods, O Bull among the Celestials, I reflected, "To whom shall she belong?" This is how, O Lord Shakra, O Destroyer of Cities, thou didst come to know this woman and, in thine heart, being the Lord of the Worlds, thou didst resolve "she shall be mine".'

"'Meantime I placed her under the protection of the

magnanimous Gautama and he, having taken care of her for many years, gave her back to me, whereupon I, having tested the absolute self-control of that illustrious ascetic and recognizing the height of his austerity, gave her to him in wedlock. That virtuous and renowned Muni was gratified with her company but the Gods were in despair because she had been given to Gautama and thou, enraged, thy heart filled with desire, went to the hermitage of the Sage and beheld the woman who was as radiant as a flame in a brazier, whereupon thou didst ravish her in the heat of thy passion. Thereafter thou wert observed by that high-born Rishi in the hermitage and, in his indignation, that extremely powerful ascetic cursed thee, due to which, O King of the Gods, thou hast just suffered this change of circumstance. And that ascetic addressed thee, saying :—

" ' " Since thou hast wantonly ravished my spouse, O Vasava, thou shalt fall captive to thine enemy on the field of battle! This vile passion that thou hast manifested, O Perverse Wretch, will undoubtedly spread among men and women and whosoever shall be guilty of it shall bear half the responsibility, whilst the other half shall be thine; nor shall thy state be permanent, for the sovereignty of whoever the Gods choose as their King shall not endure; this is the curse I pronounce on thee!"

" ' Thus spoke Gautama and thereafter he reproached his spouse, and that exalted ascetic addressed her, saying :—

" ' " O Shameless One, leave my hermitage! Though young and lovely, since thou art inconstant, thy beauty shall no longer belong to thee alone in the world and shall assuredly be shared by all beings, since on thine account, this mischief has been perpetrated by Indra! From now on, all beings shall partake of thy beauty!"

" ' Then Ahalya sought to propitiate the great Rishi Gautama, saying :—

" ' " It was in ignorance that I suffered myself to be seduced by Indra, O Great Ascetic, for he assumed thy form, nor was it by giving way to desire, O Rishi, therefore forgive me, it is thy duty!"

" 'At these words of Ahalya's, Gautama answered :—

" ' " In the House of Ikshvaku there will be born a mighty warrior named Rama, renowned in the universe and he will

repair to the forest for the sake of the brahmins. That long-armed hero will be none other than Vishnu in human form; thou shalt behold him, O Blessed One, and, seeing him, thou shalt be purified, for it is he who can efface the sin thou hast committed. Having offered him the traditional hospitality, thou shalt return to me once again and we shall resume our common life, O Lady of fair countenance!"

"'Having spoken thus, the Rishi re-entered his hermitage, while his consort gave herself up to rigid penances. It is on account of this Sage's curse that all this has taken place; therefore, O Mighty Hero, call to mind the sin thou didst commit. This is why thou didst fall a victim to thy foes, O Vasava, and for no other cause, therefore, with thy senses fully controlled, speedily offer up a sacrifice to Vishnu. Purified by this propitiatory rite, thou shalt return to the Celestial Region. Thy son, O Lord, did not perish in the fight but was borne away to the ocean by his maternal grandfather.'

"Hearing Brahma's words, Mahendra undertook a sacrifice in honour of Vishnu and thereafter the Lord of the Gods ascended to heaven, reigning there as king.

"I have described to thee, how great was the power of Indrajita, who overcame the King of the Gods, how much more therefore was he able to triumph over other beings!"

Hearing these words of Agastya, Rama and Lakshmana as also the monkeys and titans, exclaimed "How wonderful!" and Bibishana, who stood at Rama's side, said:—

"I remember that remarkable feat now, I was formerly witness thereof."

Then Rama addressed Agastya saying:—"All thou hast said is true!"

"This, O Rama, is the narrative of the origin and progress of Ravana, the thorn in the side of the worlds, who, like his son, bore away Shakra, the King of the Gods, in the fight."

CHAPTER 31

Ravana goes to the Banks of the Narmada River

THE all-powerful Rama, in his astonishment, bowed low to that excellent Rishi Agastya and again enquired of him, saying :—

" O Blessed One, O Best of the Twice-born, when that cruel Rakshasa began to range the earth, were the worlds bereft of warriors ? Was there no prince, no being, able to oppose him, since that Lord of the Titans met with no resistance, or had the rulers of the worlds lost their power or were the many kings he overcame, without weapons ? "

Having listened to the words of that son of Raghu, the blessed Sage answered him smiling, as the Grandsire of the World addresses Rudra, and said :—

" It was destroying the rulers thus that Ravana ranged the earth and, O Rama, Lord of the Worlds, he came to the city of Mahishmati which rivalled that of the Gods, where the Deity of Fire dwelt perpetually. There a monarch reigned, named Arjuna, in effulgence like unto the fire which was kept there ever concealed in a pit covered by reeds.[1]

" On that day, the powerful Sovereign of the Haihayas, Lord Arjuna went to the River Narmada to sport with his wives and at that time, Ravana approached Mahishmati and that Indra among the Rakshasas enquired of the King's counsellors, saying :—

" ' Tell me quickly, where is the Lord Arjuna, speak truly ; I am Ravana who have come to measure my strength with that most powerful of monarchs. Do you announce mine arrival to him ! '

" Hearing Ravana's words, the sagacious ministers informed the King of the Rakshasas of the absence of their sovereign and the son of Vishravas learning from the people of the city that Arjuna had departed, went away in the direction of the Vindhya Range, which like unto a cloud floating in space, appeared to him to resemble Himavat and, springing from the earth, it

[1] Agni Kunda—A pit or hole in the ground where the sacred fire is kept.

seemed to lick the skies and was possessed of a myriad peaks. Lions frequented its caverns whilst its crystalline cataracts, falling over the cliffs, resounded like peals of laughter, and Gods, Gandharvas as also the Apsaras and Kinneras with their consorts, disporting themselves there, transformed it into a paradise. Its rivers flowed in translucent waves and that Vindhya Range, like unto Himavat, with its peaks and caves resembled Shesha with his hoods, his tongues darting forth.

" Gazing upon it, Ravana reached the Narmada River, whose pure waters flowed over a bed of stones and which emptied itself into the western sea. Buffalo, Srimaras, lions, tigers, bears and elephants, tormented by heat and thirst, agitated the waters, whilst Chakravakas, Kavandas, Hamsas, Sarasas and other waterfowl, with their impassioned warbling, abounded there. The flowering trees formed its diadem, the pairs of Chakravaka birds its breasts, the banks of sand its thighs, the flocks of swans its bright girdle; the pollen of the flowers powdered its limbs, the foam of the waves was its immaculate robe; sweet was its contact for whoever entered it and it was lovely to look upon with its flowering lotuses.

" Dismounting from the Chariot Pushpaka, close to the Narmada, that most beautiful of streams, Dashanana, a bull among titans, accompanied by his ministers, went towards it as towards a lovely and attractive woman and seated himself on the enchanting sandy banks that were frequented by Sages.

" Beholding the Narmada, the ten-necked Ravana, transported with delight, exclaimed ' It is the Ganges herself ! ' Thereafter he addressed his ministers Shuka and Sarana and others, saying :—

" ' Surya of a thousand rays seems to have changed the world to gold and, in the sky, that orb of the day whose beams were just now intense, having observed me seated here, has grown as cool as the moon. Anila, who, refreshed by the waters of the Narmada, inspired by fear of me, blows softly diffusing a sweet perfume, that marvellous stream, the Narmada, increaser of felicity, in whose waters crocodile, fish and birds abound, appears like a timid girl. You who were wounded by the weapons of kings equal to Shakra in combat and who were covered with blood like unto the sap of the Sandal Tree, now plunge into the

beautiful and hospitable Narmada as elephants intoxicated with ichor and led by Sarvabhauma immerse themselves in the Ganges. Bathing in that great river will free you from all ills! As for me, I shall presently offer up flowers in tranquillity to Kapardin on this sandy bank that shines like the autumn moon.'

"Hearing these words of Ravana, Prahasta, Shuka and Sarana with Mahodara and Dhumraksha dived into the Narmada River and, agitated by those titan leaders resembling elephants, the stream appeared like unto the Ganges when Vamana, Anjana, Padma and other great tuskers disport themselves therein.

"Thereafter, emerging from the waters, those highly powerful Rakshasas soon gathered heaps of flowers that they placed on the sandy bank, whose enchanting radiance rivalled that of a dazzling cloud and, in a moment, those titans had heaped up a mountain of flowers, whereupon the King of the Rakshasas entered the river to bathe, like unto a great tusker entering the Ganges.

"Having bathed and recited the most excellent of prayers according to tradition, Ravana emerged from the waters and divested himself of his wet garments, clothing himself in a white robe. Then the Rakshasas followed their king, who advanced with joined palms, so that they appeared like moving hills. Wherever the Lord of the Rakshasas went, a golden Shiva-Linga was borne before him and he placed it on a sandy altar and worshipped it with flowers, perfumes and sandal-paste. Having paid homage to that symbol that delivers all beings from their sufferings and which was large and exceedingly beautiful, adorned with a crescent moon, that Ranger of the Night, with uplifted arms, danced and sang before it."

CHAPTER 32

Arjuna captures Ravana

"Not far from where the dread Lord of the Rakshasas was making his offering of flowers on the sandy banks of the Narmada, Arjuna, the foremost of conquerors, supreme sovereign of Mahishmati, was sporting with his wives in the waters of that

river. In their midst, that monarch looked like a great tusker surrounded by innumerable female elephants. Then he, desiring to measure the great strength of his thousand arms, stayed the rapid course of the Narmada and, the waters thus arrested by the myriad arms of Kartavirya, flowed towards its source bearing away its banks. With its fishes, crocodiles and sharks, its carpet of flowers and Kusha Grass, the current of the Narmada grew turbulent, as in the rainy season, and, as if purposely released by Kartavirya, that flood bore away all Ravana's floral offerings, whereupon he, leaving the sacrifice only half performed, cast his glance on the river that appeared to him to resemble a cherished consort who is overwrought.

"Having surveyed the waters rising like waves in the sea, rushing from the west to overwhelm the eastern shore, Ravana observed that, in a little while, the birds no longer shunned it and it had returned to its natural state, like a woman who is pacified.

"Pointing with the finger of his right hand, Dashagriva signalled to Shuka and Sarana that they should seek out the cause of the rising current and, at this command from their king, the two brothers, Shuka and Sarana rose into the air and turned westward. Having traversed two miles, those Night-rangers observed a man in the river sporting with some women and he resembled a huge Sala Tree, his hair floating in the stream and the corners of his eyes were inflamed by the desire which agitated his heart. And that Scourge of his Foes blocked the river with his myriad arms, as a mountain the earth with its countless slopes and foot-hills, and innumerable fair women surrounded him, as a tusker in rut is encircled by female elephants.

"Beholding that prodigious sight, the two Rakshasas, Shuka and Sarana returned together to Ravana and said to him:—

"'O Prince of the Rakshasas, an unknown person, like unto an enormous Sala Tree, in order to amuse his consorts, is staying the course of the Narmada like a dyke. Restrained by his myriad arms, the river is throwing up great waves like unto the sea!'

"Hearing these words from Shuka and Sarana, Ravana said, 'It is Arjuna' and rushed away, eager to enter into combat with him. And, as Ravana, the Lord of the Rakshasas, set forth to

meet Arjuna, a fierce dust storm arose accompanied by muttering clouds raining drops of blood and that Indra among the Rakshasas, escorted by Mahodara, Mahaparshwa, Dhumraksha, Shuka and Sarana, proceeded in the direction where Arjuna was. Soon that mighty Rakshasa, of the hue of antimony, reached the waters of the Narmada and there, surrounded by his wives, as a tusker by female elephants, the foremost of monarchs, Arjuna appeared before him. Then the Lord of the Rakshasas, who was intoxicated with power, his eyes red with anger, said to Arjuna's ministers in stentorian tones :—

" ' O Counsellors of the Lord Haihaya, inform him speedily that he who is called Ravana has come to fight with him ! '

" When they heard these words of Ravana, Arjuna's ministers raised their weapons and answered him saying :—

" ' O Ravana, thou hast indeed chosen an excellent moment for combat ! Wouldst thou fight a prince who is drunk and who is, further, amidst his consorts ? Dost thou really desire to fight with our king whilst he is surrounded by his wives ? Possess thyself in patience to-day, O Dashagriva, and when the night is over, if thou still wishest to do so, then challenge Arjuna, O Dear Friend. If, however, thou art bent on combat, O Thou sated with war, then overcome us here and thereafter meet Arjuna and fight with him.'

" Then Ravana's ministers slew some of Arjuna's counsellors and devoured them avidly, and a great uproar arose on the banks of the Narmada, from the followers of Arjuna and Ravana's ministers. The soldiers of the King of the Haihayas assailed Ravana and his ministers, on whom they hurled themselves with appalling fury with arrows, darts, javelins and tridents that pierced like lightning, and they created a tumult like unto the sea with its crocodiles, fish and sharks.

" Meanwhile the ministers of Ravana, Prahasta, Shuka and Sarana, enraged and full of valour, decimated the army of Kartavirya, and Arjuna's followers, mad with terror, informed him of the attack by Ravana and his ministers.

" On these tidings, Arjuna addressed the concourse of women, saying :—' Have no fear ', and rushed out of the water, like another Pavaka emitting terrible flames, so that he resembled the Fire of Dissolution at the end of the World Period. Adorned

with bracelets of refined gold, he at once seized hold of a mace and hurled himself on the Rakshasas, whom he dispersed as the sun the darkness. With his arms, Arjuna, having brandished the huge mace, let it fall with the force of Garuda's flight.

"Then Prahasta, unshakeable, like unto a hill, mace in hand, stood barring his path, like unto the Vindhya Range obstructing the sun, and he hurled that dreadful weapon bound with copper, emitting a great shout like unto Antaka. At the tip of the pike, loosed by Prahasta's hand, a brilliant flame appeared like the point of an Ashoka Tree that seemed to glow, but the son of Kritavirya, Arjuna, without being perturbed, skilfully deflected that mace that was falling upon him, with his own weapon. Then the supreme Lord of the Haïhayas hurled himself on his adversary with his heavy weapon which he brandished in his five hundred arms.

"Struck by that powerful blow of the mace, Prahasta, who had confronted him, fell like a mountain that has been riven by Indra's thunderbolt.

"Seeing Prahasta lying there, Maricha, Shuka and Sarana, as also Mahodara and Dhumraksha fled from the battlefield.

"His ministers routed and Prahasta struck down, Ravana threw himself on Arjuna, the foremost of monarchs, and a formidable duel ensued between that king of a myriad arms and the twenty-armed Ravana causing the hair to stand on end. Like unto two oceans that overflow, two mountains shaken to their foundations, two flaming suns, two blazing fires, two elephants intoxicated with their own strength, two bulls fighting for a heifer, two muttering clouds, two lions proud of their strength, like unto Rudra and Kala enraged, so did the Rakshasa and the King Arjuna, armed with maces, assail each other with fearful blows. Resembling mountains, able to withstand the dreadful lightning strokes, so did man and Rakshasa endure the blows of the mace. As the noise of thunder creates reverberations, so the impact of those weapons resounded in every quarter. Arjuṇa's mace, falling on his opponent's breast, lent it the appearance of gold or a cloud illumined by lightning. In the same way, each time Ravana's mace fell on Arjuna's breast, it resembled a meteor falling on a high mountain. Neither Arjuna nor the Sovereign of the Rakshasas wearied in the struggle,

which remained undecided as formerly the duel between Bali and Indra. As two bulls struggle with their horns or two elephants with their sharp tusks, so did those two most valiant of men and Rakshasas fight. Finally Arjuna, in fury, with all his strength struck the huge chest of Ravana with his mace, but, protected by the armour bestowed on him by Brahma as a boon, that weapon was rendered impotent and fell cloven on the earth. Under the blow dealt by Arjuna, however, Ravana fell back a bow's length and sank down groaning.

"Perceiving him to be overcome, Arjuna immediately rushed on Dashagriva and seized hold of him as Garuda did a serpent. With his myriad arms, that mighty king took hold of Dashanana and bound him as Narayana had bound Bali.

" Ravana, having been made captive, all the Siddhas, Charanas and Devatas cried out, ' Well done ! Well done ! ' and showered flowers on Arjuna's head. As a tiger who has captured a gazelle or a lion an elephant, so did the King of the Haihayas emit loud roars like unto a cloud.

" Thereafter the night-ranger, Prahasta, having recovered consciousness, seeing Dashanana bound, rushed on Arjuna in fury and the forces of the Rakshasas assailed him with extreme violence as, at the end of the hot season, the rain-clouds break over the ocean.

" ' Release him ! Release him ! ' they cried unceasingly, attacking Arjuna with iron bars and spears but, entirely unmoved by the hail of weapons, ere they could reach him, the intrepid King of the Haihayas, Scourge of his Foes, speedily took hold of those projectiles hurled at him by the enemies of the Gods, and by means of many a dreadful and irresistible missile, he put them to flight as the wind disperses the clouds.

" Having scattered the Rakshasas, Arjuna, the son of Kritavirya, surrounded by his friends, bearing Ravana, bound, returned to his city. Then the Twice-born and the people scattered flowers and rice upon him, as he made his entry into the capital, resembling the God of a Thousand Eyes when he captured Bali."

CHAPTER 33

Arjuna releases Ravana on the request of Poulastya

"Hearing from the Gods in heaven of Ravana's capture, which resembled the binding of the wind, Poulastya, despite his self-mastery, was moved by tender affection for his offspring and approached the Lord of Mahishmati. Entering the path of the wind, whom he equalled in velocity, that Twice-born One, with the swiftness of thought, reached the City of Mahishmati and, as Brahma enters Indra's capital, he penetrated into that city that resembled Amaravati and was full of prosperous and cheerful people.

" Walking on foot, he advanced like unto the sun with such effulgence that the eye could scarcely rest upon him and, beholding him, the inhabitants hastened to inform Arjuna.

" ' It is Poulastya ', said that Sovereign of the Haihayas on perceiving him, whereupon, with joined palms, he touched his forehead in salutation as he went forward to meet the ascetic. Like Brihaspati before Shakra so did the Purohita precede the king, bearing the Arghya and also the Madhuparka offerings.

" Thereafter the Rishi drew near like unto the rising sun, and Arjuna, deeply moved on beholding him, paid obeisance to him as Indra offers reverence to Brahma. Presenting him with the Madhuparka, a cow, and water wherewith to wash his feet, as also the Arghya, that Indra among Monarchs addressed Poulastya in a voice trembling with delight and said :—

" ' Since I behold thee, O Thou whose sight is hard to obtain, to-day Mahishmati has become the equal of Amaravati, O Foremost of the Twice-born ! To-day I am happy, O Lord, to-day, my desires are consummated ; to-day my birth is rendered fruitful ; to-day, my penance has been blessed since I now embrace thy two feet that are worshipped by the Celestial Host. Here is my kingdom and here my sons and my consorts at thy service ; what are thy commands ? '

" Then Poulastya, having enquired concerning his welfare, the discharge of his duty and the sacrificial fires and his offspring, said to the Sovereign of the Haihayas :—

" ' O Foremost of Kings, whose eyes are as large as lotus petals, whose face shines like the full moon, none is equal to thee in strength since thou hast conquered Dashagriva, he, before whom, the ocean and the wind are stayed and remain motionless in fear, he, my grandson whom thou didst make captive on the battlefield, who till now was invincible. Thou hast swallowed his glory and rendered thy name illustrious. O Dear Friend, on my request, now release Dashanana ! '

" Thereupon Arjuna, without uttering a word, having listened to Poulastya's appeal, cheerfully released the foremost of the Rakshasas and, having set that enemy of the Gods free, Arjuna honoured him with jewels, garlands and celestial raiment and contracted an alliance with him in the presence of fire, then, prostrating himself at the feet of Brahma's son,[1] he returned to his abode.

" Thereafter Poulastya himself dismissed the powerful Lord of the Rakshasas after embracing him and he, having received hospitality, departed, ashamed at his defeat, whilst Poulastya, the son of that Grandsire of the World, he the foremost of Munis, who had just delivered Dashagriva, returned to Brahma-loka.

" Thus, despite his immense strength, was Ravana, who had been defeated by Kartavirya, released at Poulastya's request. So are the mighty overcome by those who are still mightier than they, O Thou, who increaseth the felicity of the Raghavas ! He who desires his own happiness should not despise his adversaries.

" Meanwhile the Lord of those eaters of flesh, having contracted a friendship with that thousand-armed monarch, began to range the earth full of arrogance, overcoming its rulers."

CHAPTER 34

Bali hangs Ravana on his Girdle

"RELEASED by Arjuna, Ravana, the Lord of the Rakshasas, unwearyingly ranged the earth and whenever he heard of any who was possessed of extraordinary strength, whether man or titan,

[1] Poulastya.

in his arrogance he sought him out in order to provoke him to combat.

" One day he came to the city of Kishkindha and challenged King Bali of the golden diadem. There he found the kinsfolk of that monkey only, Tara, her father Sushena and the Lord Sugriva, who answered that belligerent one, who had just come, saying :—

" ' O King of the Rakshasas, Bali, who would have accepted thy challenge, is not here, what other Plavamgama is able to meet thee in combat ? Bali has gone to the four oceans to perform the Sandhya Ceremony, O Ravana, he will soon return, have patience awhile ! That heap of bones, white as conch shells, belongs to those who desired to measure their strength in combat with the Lord of the Vanaras, O Prince. Even hadst thou sucked the nectar of immortality, O Ravana, thy meeting with Bali would put an end to thine existence. O Son of Vishravas, look upon this marvellous universe once more for soon it will no longer be possible for thee to do so. Since thou art in haste to die, however, go to the southern sea where thou wilt behold Bali who resembles the Deity of Fire.'

" Thereupon, having inveighed against Tara and the others, Ravana, that Ravana of the Worlds,[1] remounted his Chariot Pushpaka and drove towards the southern sea. There he beheld Bali, like unto a mountain of gold, absorbed in the performance of Sandhya.

" Descending from the Pushpaka Car, Ravana of the hue of collyrium, stole upon Bali silently in order to seize him, but by chance, he was observed by him who had no doubts as to his fell design, though Bali remained unmoved like a lion in the presence of a hare or Garuda before a serpent, and he was in no wise perturbed by Ravana of malevolent intent.

" He reflected, ' This is Ravana, who with malice in his soul, approaches in order to seize hold of me. I shall hang him on my girdle and go to the three other oceans, then all will behold mine adversary, Dashagriva, his arms and limbs and his raiment dangling, hooked to my side like a snake caught by Garuda.'

" Thinking thus, Bali remained there reciting his Vedic Mantras in a low voice, like unto the King of the Mountains.

[1] Ravana meaning " The One who causes others to cry out '.

Each desiring to lay hold on the other, in the pride their strength inspired in them, the Sovereign of the Monkeys and the Lord of the Rakshasas sought to realise their design.

"Perceiving by the sound of his footsteps that Ravana was about to place his hands upon him, Bali, though his back was turned, caught hold of the titan as Garuda a serpent and, having seized the Lord of the Rakshasas, hooked him to his girdle, thereupon that monkey, with one bound, sprang into the air, and though lacerated and torn by his nails, Bali carried off Ravana as a tempest propels a cloud.

"Meantime the ministers of Dashanana, whom he was bearing away, fell upon Bali emitting loud cries in order to make him release him. Pursued by them, Bali, in his aerial course, shone like the sun that is followed by a drift of clouds in space. Those foremost of the Rakshasas, exhausted by the wind that caused their arms and thighs to shake, were stayed in their course, and the mountains themselves made way for Bali, how much more those who, made of flesh and blood, sought to survive. With a speed impossible to flocks of birds, that Indra among monkeys, in great haste, paid obeisance to all the oceans in turn and, at dusk, received the homage of all winged creatures on the way, he, the foremost among them; thereafter with Ravana he finally reached the Western Sea. There that monkey performed the Sandhya Ceremony and, having bathed, still bearing Dashanana, went to the Northern Sea. Thereafter that great monkey with his adversary traversed thousands of leagues, swift as the wind or thought. Having observed the Sandhya Ceremony at the Northern Sea, Bali, carrying Dashanana, went to the Eastern Sea. There, Vasavi, the Lord of the Monkeys, performed his evening devotions and, still bearing Ravana, he returned to Kishkindha. Having performed the Sandhya at the four oceans, that monkey, weary of supporting Ravana, halted in a wood near Kishkindha and that King of the Monkeys, unhooking Ravana from his girdle, with a mocking laugh, said:—'Whence art thou?'

"Greatly astonished, the King of the Rakshasas, whose eyes were half-closed with fatigue, addressed the Lord of the Monkeys thus:—

"'O Foremost of Monkeys, O Thou who resemblest Mahendra, I am the Lord of the Rakshasas, Ravana, who came in the

hope of entering into combat with thee and here I am, thy captive! What strength, what energy, what inner power has enabled thee to bind me thus without fatigue and with such speed, O Valiant Monkey? Assuredly there are only three beings who could have acted thus, the mind, the wind and Suparna. Having witnessed thy power, O Bull among Monkeys, in the presence of fire I wish to enter into an alliance of sincere and enduring friendship with thee! Consorts, sons, city, kingdom, pleasures, raiment and food will all be shared by us, O King, O Foremost of the Monkeys!'

"Thereupon, lighting a fire, monkey and titan became brothers and embraced each other. Clasping hands, the monkey and the titan joyfully entered Kishkindha, like unto two lions into a rocky cavern. Resembling another Sugriva, Ravana sojourned there for a month and thereafter his ministers desirous of overcoming the Three Worlds, led him away.

"Thus did Ravana act with Bali formerly and, although humbled by him, swore to be his brother in the presence of fire. Bali's strength was unequalled, O Rama, it was immeasurable; yet thou didst consume him as the fire a cricket."

CHAPTER 35

The Story of Hanuman's Childhood

THEN Rama made a further enquiry of that Sage, whose hermitage was in the southern region and, paying obeisance to him in great reverence, with joined palms addressed him in pregnant terms, saying:—

"Assuredly the prowess of Bali and Ravana was incomparable, yet, to my mind at least, it was never equal to Hanuman's! Courage, skill, strength, tenacity of purpose, sagacity, experience, energy and prowess are all to be found in Hanuman!

"When beholding the Ocean, the army of the monkeys was in despair, that long-armed hero consoled them, traversing a hundred leagues and destroying the City of Lanka. Entering Ravana's inner apartments, he discovered Sita and encouraged

her by his words. Single-handed, Hanuman slew those who marched at the head of the enemy forces, the sons of Ravana's ministers, the Kinkaras, and thereafter, when he had broken his fetters and admonished Dashanana, he reduced Lanka to ashes as Pavaka the world. Such feats were never surpassed by Indra, Varuna, Vishnu or Kuvera. By the might of his arms, I have conquered Lanka and regained Sita, Lakshmana, my kingdom, friends and kinsfolk. Who but Hanuman, the companion of the King of the Vanaras, would have been capable of obtaining tidings of Janaki? But how comes it, that in his devotion to Sugriva, he did not consume Bali at the time of the quarrel, as a fire a shrub? It seems to me that Hanuman was not yet aware of his powers when he witnessed the King of the Monkeys, whom he loved as his own being, set at nought! Recount to me in detail and candidly everything concerning Hanuman, O Blessed and Illustrious Ascetic, O Thou whom the Gods revere!"

Hearing these sagacious words, the Sage, in Hanuman's presence, answered:—

"What thou hast said regarding Hanuman is true, O Prince of the Raghus! I deem none is equal to him in strength or surpasses him in swiftness and intelligence but formerly an irrevocable curse was pronounced on him by the Sages, on account of which, that hero was made unconscious of his great power, O Scourge of thy Foes.

"In his childhood, O Mighty Rama, he did something of which I cannot speak, so puerile was it, but if thou so desirest, O Raghava, I will disclose it to thee.

"There is a mountain named Sumeru that Surya gilds as a boon; there Kesharin, the sire of Hanuman, dwells. Vayu begot a wonderful child on his cherished and illustrious consort, Anjana, and she brought that son, whose colour was like unto an ear of corn, into the world. Wishing to pluck some fruits, that lovely woman penetrated into a thicket, and the child, who in his mother's absence suffered greatly from hunger, began to emit piercing cries, like unto Karttikeya in the Shara Wood.

"At that moment, he observed the sun rising like unto a bunch of Java flowers,[1] and, eager for food, he imagined it to be a fruit

[1] China Roses

and rushed towards it. Turning to the rising sun, the child, himself like unto the dawn, wishing to lay hold of it, sprang into the sky. And Hanuman's bounds, he being but a child, greatly astonished the Devas, Danavas and Yakshas who reflected, 'Neither Vayu, Garuda nor even thought itself have the velocity of this son of the Wind who has leapt into the sky. If, whilst still a child, the speed of his flight is such, what will it not be when he attains his youthful strength.'

"Now Vayu followed in his son's wake lest the sun should scorch him and protected him with his cooling breath. Thus Hanuman, rising in space, traversed thousands of leagues and, on account of his sire's power and his own guilelessness, drew near to the sun.

"'That little One is not conscious of his error' reflected Surya, 'we must act accordingly', and he refrained from consuming him.

"Now on that very day that Hanuman sprang into the sky to seize hold of the solar orb, Rahu[1] had prepared to take hold of it himself and, coming in contact with that child in the sun's chariot, Rahu sprang away in fear, he, the scourge of the sun and moon. Provoked, that son of Simhika went to Indra's abode and, scowling, said to that God, who was surrounded by the Celestial Host :—

"'O Vasava, in order to satisfy my hunger, thou didst bestow the sun and moon on me, why hast thou made a present of them to another, O Slayer of Bali and Vritra? To-day, which is the time of the conjunction, I had gone to lay hold of the sun when another Rahu approached and seized it.'

"Hearing these words of Rahu, Vasava, astonished, rose up from his throne and bearing his golden diadem, went out. Thereafter he mounted Airavata, foremost of elephants, who was as high as a hill or the peak of Mount Kailasha with his four tusks, running with mada juice, enormous, richly caparisoned and whose golden bells rang merrily.

"Then Indra commanded Rahu to precede him and directed his course to where Surya and Hanuman were. Thereupon Rahu set out with all speed leaving Vasava far behind and the child, Hanuman, beheld him as he drew near, whereupon he

[1] The demon who causes the sun's periodic eclipse.

let go of the sun and, taking Rahu to be a fruit, once more bounded into the sky to seize Simhika's son.

" Observing that Plavamgama loosing his hold on the sun in order to throw himself upon him, the offspring of Simhika, of whom the head alone remained visible, taking refuge under Indra's protection, in his terror, cried out ' Indra, Indra ' without ceasing, and Indra, recognizing the voice of Rahu ere he was able to discern him, answered his appeal, saying ' Have no fear, I am about to slay him ! '

" Meantime, beholding Airavata, Maruti reflected ' O, the lovely fruit ! ' and threw himself on that Lord of Elephants and while he sought to take hold of Airavata, his form fearful to behold suddenly appeared over Indra and his followers. Thereafter as he rushed on Sachi's consort, Indra, not unduly angered, with his finger loosed a thunderbolt that struck Hanuman and, at the impact, the child fell on a mountain, in his fall breaking his left jaw. Seeing his son lying inanimate under the stroke of the thunderbolt, Pavana was enraged against Indra, and the God Maruta, who penetrates and infuses all beings, withdrew into a cave to which he bore his child. Thereafter, as Vasava restrains the floods, he caused immense sufferings to all beings by preventing the passage of excreta and urine in them.

" On account of Vayu's wrath all creatures on every side were deprived of their breath so that their joints were dislocated and they became as blocks of wood. All sacred studies, the holy syllable ' Vashat ', religious ceremonies and duties being suspended by Vayu's displeasure, the Three Worlds became a hell.

" Then all creatures with the Gandharvas, Devas, Asuras and men, in their affliction and the desire to become happy once more, hurried to Prajapati ; and the Gods, their bellies swollen, with joined palms, said to him :—

" ' Thou hast created four kinds of beings, O Blessed One, Thou art their protector. Thou hast given us Pavana as the Lord of our lives, why nevertheless, has he who had become the Ruler of the Vital Breaths, now brought about this misfortune in the manner of a woman in the inner apartments ? '

" Hearing these words of all the beings, Prajapati, who was their protector, said to them, ' It is true ! ' and added ' Learn

the reason which incited Vayu to anger and has caused this impediment. O Beings, this I have probed for myself. The Foremost of the Gods, this day, caused his son to fall at Rahu's instigation, whereupon that God of the Wind became enraged and Vayu, though bodiless, circulates in every body. A body bereft of Vayu is like a piece of wood, Vayu is the vital breath, Vayu is felicity itself, Vayu is the universe; without Vayu, the whole world cannot be happy; now that the universe is bereft of Vayu it is deprived of life; all creatures without breath are as boards. For not having honoured the son of Aditi, we must seek out Maruta, the author of our ills, lest we perish!'

"Thereupon, accompanied by all beings, Prajapati with the Devas, Gandharvas, Serpents and Guyhakas approached Maruta in the place to which he had borne his son, whom the King of the Gods had struck down.

"Meanwhile, perceiving the offspring of Sadagati,[1] radiant as the sun, fire or gold, in that dark cave where he had been withdrawn, the Four-faced God was moved with compassion as also the Devas, Gandharvas, Rishis, Yakshas and Rakshasas."

CHAPTER 36

The Boons bestowed on the Child Hanuman and how he was cursed by the Ascetics

"As soon as he beheld the Grandsire of the World, Vayu, taking his young child, for whom he had wept as one dead, rushed towards Dhatar. With his waving locks, his diadem and the garlands with which he was adorned, Vayu, having bowed three times, fell at the feet of Brahma.

"Then he, who was conversant with the Veda, his arms decorated with dazzling bracelets, touched the child as if in play, thereupon, that God sprung from the lotus, merely by caressing the child, revived him as seed that is watered.

[1] Sadagati—A name of Vayu, the God of the Wind, meaning 'Ever-going', his son being Hanuman. The Wind God is also known as Vayu, Kesarin and other titles.

"Beholding his son restored, the Wind-god, blowing auspiciously, began to circulate in all beings as erstwhile and, freed from the obstructions caused by Maruta, all creatures became happy, like lakes covered with lotuses over which an icy wind has ceased to blow.

"Then Brahma, who possesses the three pairs of qualities,[1] who is Himself the essence of Trimurti, having his abode in the Three Worlds,[2] He who is revered by the Gods, said to the Celestials, in his anxiety to propitiate Maruta :—

"'Know the truth, I will impart it to you for it is important! Hear all of you, Mahendra, Agni, Varuna, Maheshwara, Dhaneshwara and others—this child will carry out all you have to accomplish, therefore grant him every boon in order to gratify his sire.'

"Thereupon the God of a Thousand Eyes, delighted, his brow radiant, took off his garland of lotuses and spoke thus :—

"'Since the thunderbolt escaped from my grasp and shattered his jaw, this child shall be called Hanuman. I shall bestow an excellent boon upon him ; from to-day, he will be invulnerable to thunderbolts!'

"Then Martanda, in his turn, that blessed One who dispels the darkness, said :—

"'I will bestow a hundredth part of mine effulgence upon him and when he is able to learn the Shastras, I will endow him with eloquence!'

"Thereafter Varuna accorded him the following boon, saying :—

"'Innumerable years shall pass, yet shall my noose and my waters never be used against him!'

"After this, Yama granted him the boon of invulnerability and immunity to disease and said :—

"'As a sign of my satisfaction, I shall grant him the further boon of never being slain in battle!'

"Then the red-eyed Dhanada spoke thus :—

"'This mace held by me shall protect him in combat!'

[1] The three pairs of qualities—Renown and Virility ; Majesty and Beauty ; Knowledge and Detachment.

[2] The three worlds—Bhur ; Bhuvah ; Swah.

" Thereafter the God Shankara, bestowing the foremost of favours upon him, said :—

" ' I shall restrain my shafts from wounding him ! '

" Then Vishvakarma of the great Car, casting his eyes on the child, said :—

" ' He will be invulnerable to the celestial weapons forged by me and his life shall endure ! '

" Finally the magnanimous Brahma spoke thus :—

" ' None of my weapons shall be able to harm him ! '

" Beholding the child enriched by the boons of the Gods, the Four-faced Lord, Guru of the Worlds, in his satisfaction addressed Vayu, saying :—

" ' Thy son, Maruti, will be the terror of his foes, the support of his friends and invincible ! Able to change his form at will, he will accomplish all he desires and go wheresoever he pleases with unimaginable velocity. In order to destroy Ravana and gratify Rama, he will perform such feats of arms that will cause every being to tremble ! '

" These words pacified Vayu, as also the Immortals and, with the Grandsire at their head, they all departed to the place from whence they had come.

" Vayu, the Bearer of Perfume, taking his son, returned home and, telling Anjana of the boons he had received, went away.

" O Rama, receiving these favours which filled him with power, and with the temerity natural to him, Hanuman resembled the ocean that is overflowing.

" In his intemperate ardour, that bull among monkeys shamelessly began to create trouble in the hermitages of the great Rishis. Scattering the spoons, jars, sacrificial fires, and heaps of bark used by those peace-loving Sages, overturning and shattering them, by such exploits, he, who had been rendered invulnerable to all brahmanic weapons by Shambhu, distinguished himself.

" Knowing from whence his power was derived, the great Rishis bore with him, nevertheless, despite the warnings of his sire, Kesharin, the son of Anjana exceeded all bounds, whereupon highly indignant, those mighty Rishis, born in the line of Bhrigu and Angiras, cursed him, O Prince of the Raghus, without, however, giving rein to their full anger and irritation.

"They said :— 'Since, in the knowledge of thy power, O Plavamgama, thou dost harass us, by the adverse effect of our curse thou shalt become unaware of it for a long time, but, when it is remembered by thee, thou shalt be able to wield it effectively.'

"Thereafter, the knowledge of his powers was taken from him in virtue of the great Rishis' words and, from that moment, Hanuman ranged the solitudes in a placid mood.

"At that time, Riksharajas, full of effulgence, like unto the sun, the father of Bali and Sugriva, ruled over all the monkeys and after a prolonged reign, that Sovereign of the Monkeys succumbed to the natural law of time and, having died, the ministers, learned in the sacred formulas, installed Bali in his father's stead and Sugriva as heir-apparent.

"Hanuman and Sugriva were as one and there was no difference between them ; they loved each other as do Agni and Anila but when the quarrel between Bali and Sugriva arose, Hanuman, on account of the brahmins' curse, was unaware of his powers, nor, in the terror in which Bali had thrown him, did Sugriva call them to mind, O Lord. The curse of the brahmins having robbed him of that knowledge, the foremost of Monkeys, supported Sugriva as an ally in the fight, who resembled a lion that a great elephant subdues. For valour, energy, intelligence, strength, amiability, sweetness of disposition, knowledge of what is fitting and not fitting, steadfastness, skill, courage and audacity, who can surpass Hanuman in the world?

"That Indra among monkeys, in order to acquire grammar took refuge with the Sun-god and, in his spirit of enquiry that was without equal, he travelled from the mountain where he rises to the one where he sets, with a large book, a vast encyclopedia comprising the Sutras, their Commentaries, their meaning and the synthesis.

"That Prince of Monkeys became an accomplished scholar and none equalled him in the Shastras nor in the interpretation of the Prosody. In all the sciences and in the rules of asceticism, he rivalled Brihaspati. By thy grace, he will become a very brahmin conversant with the meaning of the most recent grammatical systems. Like unto an ocean, eager to engulf the worlds, like unto Pavaka desirous of consuming them at the

final dissolution, who is able to challenge Hanuman, that second Antaka?

" O Rama, on thine account, the Gods created Hanuman and the other foremost of monkeys, Sugriva, Mainda, Dvivida as also Nila, Tara, Tareya, Nala, Rambha, Gaja, Gavaksha, Gavaya, Sudamshtra, Prabhojya, Atimukha and Nala as also the bears with those leading monkeys who were all created by the Gods, O Rama.

" I have answered thy question fully and have just told thee of Hanuman's exploit accomplished in childhood."

Agastya's tale greatly amazed Rama, Saumitri, the monkeys and the Rakshasas, and Agastya addressed Rama, saying:—

" Thou hast learnt all that I have to tell; now that we have beheld thee and received thine hospitality, we crave leave to depart!"

Hearing the words of the supremely pious Agastya, Raghava with joined palms, bowing to that great Rishi, said:—

" To-day the Gods, my parents, ancestors and my family have been blessed by thy holy sight, yea, sanctified for ever. In the joy of my return, this is what I have to ask of thee. It is for thee in thine affection to concede it.

" I, who came to establish the inhabitants of the city and the country in their personal duties, desire thy co-operation in the sacrifice that I now wish to perform, O Thou who belongest to the virtuous. Wilt thou, whose asceticism eliminates all faults, not assist me in these ceremonies, for then shall I be welcomed by mine ancestors and my felicity be complete? Do ye all assemble here!"

On this request, Agastya and the other Rishis of rigid penances, answered, " Let it be so!" and went to their hermitages.

Having spoken thus, all those ascetics departed in the order in which they had come.

Raghava, having reflected on the utterances of the Sage, was greatly astonished, and the orb of the day having withdrawn behind the Asta Mountain, he dismissed the monkeys and the kings; thereafter that foremost of men, having performed his evening devotions and the night having come, retired to the inner apartments.

CHAPTER 37

Homage is paid to Shri Rama

THE installation of Kakutstha, who was versed in the science of the Self, having taken place, the following night was spent by his subjects in rejoicing and when it had passed, at dawn, those who were charged with waking the king assembled at the palace. Thereafter these sweet-voiced minstrels, like unto the learned Kinneras, chanted pleasantly to that valiant prince as to a cherished son :—

" O Gentle Hero, awake! O Thou who increaseth the felicity of Kaushalya, when thou dost sleep the whole universe is wrapped in slumber, O Monarch! Thine heroism is equal to Vishnu's and thy beauty to the Ashvins. Thou, the rival of Brihaspati in wisdom, art a second Prajapati. Thy life's span is like the earth's, thy radiance like the sun's, thou art endowed with the swiftness of the wind and thy profundity is like the deep. Thou art unshakable like unto Sthanu[1] and thy charm rivals the moon. No king was ever like unto thee in the past nor shall there ever be such a monarch in time to come, O Sovereign. O Lion among Men, since thou art invincible, firm in thy duty and ever seeketh the welfare of thy subjects, glory and prosperity will never desert thee. Humility and piety ever reside in thee, O Kakutstha! "

These and similar praises were addressed to him by the bards as also the Sutas,[2] who, with divine hymns, sought to rouse Raghava, and it was amidst these melodious chants that he woke from sleep and rose from his couch, that was covered with white stuffs, like unto Vishnu when he leaves the snake that has served as his bed.

Then that magnanimous hero stood up and countless attendants approached him, bowing with joined palms, offering him beautiful ewers for washing and, having bathed and purified himself, he went at the appointed hour to kindle the sacrificial

[1] Sthanu—Shiva.
[2] Sutas—A class of personal attendants.

fire and thereafter with swift steps, he entered the sacred pavilion reserved for the Ikshvakus. There for a long time Rama paid homage to the Gods, his ancestors and the brahmins, according to tradition, then, coming forth surrounded by his people, he went to the outer court of the palace accompanied by his counsellors and also the family priests, who shone in their own effulgence, led by Vasishtha. Wealthy Kshatriyas, Lords of countless provinces walked at Rama's side, as the Celestials by Shakra. Bharata, Lakshmana and Shatrughna, of great renown, joyfully formed an escort of honour round him, like unto the Three Vedas at the Adhvara Sacrifice.[1] At his side walked innumerable attendants with joined palms and radiant countenance, named Muditas. Twenty monkeys full of energy and prowess led by Sugriva followed Rama, and Bibishana between four Rakshasas walked beside that hero, as Guhyakas by the Lord of Wealth. Elders, and merchants and those of noble families, bowing to the king, followed him with dignity, and that Sovereign, surrounded by the blessed and illustrious Rishis, mighty kings, monkeys and Rakshasas, like unto the Chief of the Gods, received continual homage from the ascetics; and the countless praises of those who entered Rama's presence, and traditions, full of eloquence and piety, were constantly recited by the magnanimous brahmins versed in the Scriptures.

FIRST OF THE INTERPOLATED CHAPTERS

2nd SERIES

ON having heard the whole story, that descendant of the House of Raghu addressed the Sage Agastya and said :—

" Revered Lord, Riksharajas was the name of Sugriva and Bali's sire but what was the name of their mother? From whence did she come and why were Bali and Sugriva so called? Do thou tell me all concerning this matter."

Thereupon the Sage Agastya answered :—

" O Rama, I shall relate everything briefly that I heard from Shri Narada when he visited my hermitage.

[1] Adhvara—A religious sacrifice, especially the Soma Sacrifice.

" Once, when that highly virtuous ascetic was journeying through the world, he came to my retreat and I paid him due homage and made him welcome. When he was seated at his ease, being curious, I put this same question to him and he answered me, saying :—

" ' Hear me, O Great Ascetic, Foremost of the Pious, there is a mountain named Meru, which is all golden, enchanting and most beautiful. Its central peak is greatly revered by the Gods and the marvellous assembly hall of Brahma is situated there, which extends over a hundred leagues. The Four-mouthed Deity, sprung from a lotus, ever resides there and, on a certain occasion while he was practising Yoga, a few tears fell from his eyes, whereupon the Patriarch, with his hand, brushed them away allowing them to fall on the earth and from them a monkey was born.

" ' O Foremost of Men, as soon as that monkey appeared, the high-souled Brahma instructed him in sweet accents, saying :—

" ' " Do thou proceed to that foremost of the mountains where the Gods perpetually dwell, O Chief of Monkeys, and subsist there on the various fruits and roots. On that enchanting mountain, thou shouldst live depending on me, O Foremost of Monkeys, living in this wise for some time, thou shalt attain prosperity." '

" O Rama, that great monkey, offering salutations to the feet of Brahma, said to the Creator of the World :—

" ' O Lord, I shall execute thy behest and live depending on Thee ! '

" Thereafter that forest dweller immediately proceeded to the wood abounding in fruit and blossom, and there he lived on fruits, gathering honey and various blooms, returning to Brahma each evening with an offering of the most excellent fruit and flowers, which he placed at the feet of that God of Gods. In this way he spent a long time on that mountain.

" O Rama, once that great monkey, Riksharajas, was afflicted by thirst and went to the northern peak of Mount Meru where he beheld a lake ringing with the songs of a myriad birds. Shaking his neck in delight, he observed his reflection in the waters and, beholding that image, the monkey chief filled with anger and anxiety asked himself, ' What arch enemy of mine

dwells in these waters? I shall destroy the excellent abode of that vicious-souled one!' Thinking thus within himself, that monkey, in his impetuosity, plunged into the lake and with a bound emerged once more, but as he rose from the waters, he found himself transformed into a woman, who was extremely charming, graceful and fair.

"Her waist was wide, her eyebrows symmetrical, her hair black and curly, her countenance fair and smiling, her bosom high and her beauty matchless. On the banks of that lake, she appeared enchanting, illumining the four quarters, agitating the minds of all beings and, in the Three Worlds, she was as beautiful as any. O Rama, she resembled the simple creeper, Sastilata, or Lakshmi bereft of her lotus or the pure rays of the moon or Parvati.

"At that time, Indra, the Lord of the Celestials, having worshipped the feet of Brahma, was returning by that way and the Sun-god also came thither.

"Simultaneously beholding that lovely female form, they were overcome with desire, and, their minds being in a ferment, they were wholly swept away.

"Thereupon Indra begot a son on that woman, named Bali, so-called because his seed fell on the hair of that beauty, and the Solar Deity begot another son on her, named Sugriva, who sprang from her neck.

"Those two powerful monkeys being born, Indra conferred a lasting golden chain on Bali and returned to his own abode and, having engaged Hanuman, the Wind-god's son, in the service of Sugriva, the Sun-god too returned to the Celestial Region.

"O King, when the sun rose after that night had passed, Riksharajas resumed his own monkey shape and he gave his two highly powerful sons, those foremost of monkeys possessed of yellow eyes, able to change their shape at will, some honey like unto nectar to drink. Thereafter, taking them with him, he went to the abode of Brahma and that God, beholding Riksharajas with his two sons, consoled him in diverse ways and issued a command to his messenger, saying:—

"'At my behest, O Messenger, proceed to the beautiful City of Kishkindha, that large, golden and enchanting capital is worthy of Riksharajas. There thousands of Vanaras dwell,

besides those who are endowed with magic powers. Inaccessible and abounding in gems, those of the four castes inhabit it, and it is pure and sacred.

" 'At my command, Vishvakarma created that celestial and enchanting City of Kishkindha, do thou find an abode for Riksharajas, the foremost of the Monkeys and his sons there, and, having called the leading Plavamgamas together and received them courteously, install him on the throne. On beholding this monkey chief, gifted with intelligence, they will all become subject to him.'

" Brahma having spoken thus, the celestial messenger with Riksharajas proceeded to that most beautiful City of Kishkindha with the speed of the wind where, as commanded by Brahma, he installed Riksharajas as king.

" Thereafter, having bathed and being adorned with a crown and various ornaments, Riksharajas, with a joyful heart began to rule over the monkeys, and all the Vanaras residing on the earth, comprising the Seven Islands and bounded by the sea, became subject to him.

" Thus Riksharajas was both father and mother to Bali and Sugriva ; may prosperity attend thee ! The learned, who listen to and cause others to hear this narrative, enhancing their delight, obtain all their desires.

" O Lord, I have duly described at length all that concerns the birth of the monkey kings and the Rakshasas."

SECOND OF THE INTERPOLATED CHAPTERS

2nd SERIES

SHRI RAMA with his brothers, hearing that ancient and wonderful tale, was astonished and, having listened to the Rishi Agastya's narrative, said :—

" By thy favour, O Rishi, I have heard this highly sacred theme ! O Great Muni, I am filled with amazement on hearing the story of Bali and Sugriva. O Blessed One, I am not surprised that those two sons of the Gods should be so powerful since their origin was divine ! "

Rama, having uttered these words, Agastya said :—

" O Long-armed One, even thus was the birth of Bali and Sugriva brought about in days of yore. I shall now relate another ancient legend to thee, O Rama, as to why Ravana bore Sita away, hear me with attention !

" In the Golden Age, Ravana offered reverence to the Grandsire's offspring, that truthful Rishi Sanatkumara, who, shining in his own effulgence, was as resplendent as the sun and who was seated in his own retreat, and paying homage to him, Ravana said :—

" ' O Lord, who is there now among the Gods, who is brave and powerful and by whose aid the Celestials can overcome their foes, one whom the Twice-born worship daily and upon whom devotees constantly meditate ? O Thou, whose wealth is thy piety and who art possessed of the sixfold riches, do thou graciously tell me in detail.'

" Being conversant with Ravana's intentions, the glorious Sage Sanatkumara, having knowledge of all things through his meditations, said to him affectionately :—' Hear me, O My Son, the wise, in their sacrifices, duly pay homage to the Lord of the Universe, whose origin is unknown to us, who is daily worshipped by the Celestials and Asuras, He is the supremely powerful Narayana from whose navel, Brahma, the Creator of the World has sprung and from whom, all things animate and inanimate are born. Yogis meditate upon Him and offer sacrifices in His honour according to the Puranas, Vedas, Pancharatras and other rituals. In combat, He is ever victorious over the Daityas, Danavas, Rakshasas and other enemies of the Gods, all of whom ever worship Him.'

" Hearing the words of the great Ascetic Sanatkumara, Ravana, the Lord of the Rakshasas, making obeisance to him, answered :—

" ' Being slain by Hari, to what state do the Daityas, Danavas and Rakshasas attain and why does Hari destroy them ? '

" Thereupon Sanatkumara replied :—' They who are slain by the Gods abide in Swarga but are born again on earth when their merit is exhausted. They are born and they die, they suffer and enjoy according to the merits of their previous births, but those who are slain by the Wielder of the Discus, the Lord of the

Three Worlds, Hari, attain to His region, since even His wrath is like unto a boon, O King !'

" Hearing the words spoken by that mighty Ascetic Sanatkumara, that night-ranger, Ravana, filled with delight and wonder, began to reflect on how he might enter into conflict with the Lord."

THIRD OF THE INTERPOLATED CHAPTERS

2nd SERIES

"As the vicious-souled Ravana was reflecting thus, the great Ascetic Sanatkumara said to him :—

" ' O Long-armed Warrior, what thy mind has conceived will be accomplished in a great encounter ! Rejoice and wait awhile ! '

" Hearing these words, the long-armed Ravana addressed the Sage and said :—

" ' O Foremost of the Rishis, do thou tell me in detail what are His distinguishing characteristics ? '

" Having listened to the Lord of the Rakshasas, the ascetic replied :—

" ' Listen and I will tell thee all :—O Foremost of the Rakshasas, in the universe of animate and inanimate beings, that great God is all-pervading, subtle, eternal and omnipresent. He is present in the Celestial Region, on earth and in the region under the earth, on the mountains, in the forests and all stationary objects, rivers and cities ; He is "Aum", He is Truth, He is Savitri and the earth ; He is the supporter of the earth and the Serpent Ananta ; He is day and night, morning and evening, death, the moon, time, the wind, Brahma, Rudra, Indra and Varuna. He causes the worlds to appear and shine forth ; He creates them, destroys them, rules over them and sports therein. He is eternal, the Lord of Men, He is Vishnu, the Ancient Purusha and the only Destroyer. What more is there to say, O Dashanana ? He pervades the Three Worlds, the moving and unmoving. Wearing yellow raiment like unto the filaments of a lotus, Narayana resembles the lightning flashes. Bearing the

Shrivatsa Mark on His breast, that cloud-coloured Lord, like unto the moon, is pleasing to look upon. Lakshmi resides in His body in the form of warfare, as lightning in the clouds. Neither Devas, Asuras nor Nagas are able to look on Him but the one, with whom He is pleased, alone beholds Him. O My Son, neither by the fruits of sacrifice, penance, self-control, gifts nor rituals nor by any other means can one behold that Supreme God. Those alone see Him who have surrendered their whole life and being to Him and who, by virtue of discriminative knowledge, have burnt up all their sins. If thou desirest to behold Him, hear me and I will tell thee all.

" ' At the close of the Golden Age and the beginning of the Silver Age, the Lord Narayana will assume human form for the sake of men and the Gods. A son, named Rama, will be born to Dasaratha of the Ikshvaku Race, who will rule on earth. Rama will be highly effulgent, powerful and as forbearing as the earth nor shall his enemies in combat be able to look on him, as one is unable to gaze upon the sun.

" ' His consort, the gracious Lakshmi shall be renowned under the name of Sita and be born as the daughter of Janaka, King of Mithila ; she will issue from the earth. In beauty, she will be unequalled in the world, endowed with auspicious marks she will ever follow Rama like a shadow, as the moon is accompanied by its beams; of virtuous conduct, she will be chaste and patient. Sita and Rama will always appear together as the sun and its rays. O Ravana, I have now related to thee all that concerns Narayana, the great, eternal and incomprehensible Brahman.'

" O Raghava, on hearing these words, the mighty Lord of the Rakshasas began to devise means whereby he might enter into combat with thee. Meditating again and again on the words of Sanatkumara, he began to wander here and there."

Listening to this narrative, Rama, his eyes wide with wonder, was greatly astonished and, being delighted, he again addressed Agastya, the foremost of the wise, saying :—

" Do thou recount the ancient traditions further, O Lord."

FOURTH OF THE INTERPOLATED CHAPTERS

2nd SERIES

THE illustrious Rishi Agastya, sprung from a vessel,[1] paying obeisance to Rama, as Brahma pays homage to Shiva, addressed that hero whose prowess was truth, saying :—

" Do thou hear me ! "

Thereafter the highly effulgent Agastya began to relate the subsequent events in that legend, and the blessed Sage with a delighted heart described to Rama all he had heard narrated, saying :—

" O Illustrious and Long-armed Rama, it is on this account that the vicious-souled Ravana stole Sita, the daughter of Janaka, away. O Thou who art possessed of long arms, O Great Warrior, O Thou who art invincible, Narada recounted this tale to me on the summit of the Meru Mountain. O Raghava, the highly effulgent One told me this story in the presence of the Devas, Gandharvas, Siddhas, Ascetics and other great Beings. O Lord of Monarchs, O Conferer of Honours, do thou hear this tale which removes great sins ! Listening to it, O Thou of long arms, the Rishis and the Devas, with delighted hearts, their eyes shining with the splendour of lotus flowers, said to the Ascetic Narada :—

" ' He, who listens to or relates this story with faith and devotion, shall be blessed with sons and grandsons and, after his death, be honoured in the Celestial Region.' "

FIFTH OF THE INTERPOLATED CHAPTERS

2nd SERIES

" O RAMA, Ravana, the Lord of the Rakshasas, proud of his strength, accompanied by his warriors, began to range the earth desirous of conquest. Whenever he heard of any among the

[1] Agastya was said to have been born in a water jar.

Daityas, Danavas or Rakshasas who were powerful, he challenged them to fight.

"O Lord of the Earth, having traversed the whole world, the Ten-necked Rakshasa beheld the Sage Narada returning from Brahmaloka to his own abode, like unto a second sun, passing through the clouds. Then Ravana, with a cheerful heart, approached him and, with joined palms, addressed the Sage, saying :—

"'O Thou gifted with the six kinds of wealth, many times thou hast beheld all creation from Brahma down to an insect. Do thou tell me, O Great One, in which region the inhabitants are the most powerful, I wish to challenge them to combat according to my whim.'

"Thereupon, reflecting an instant, the divine Sage Narada answered him saying :—

"'O King, there is a large island in the Milky Ocean, where all the inhabitants are endowed with great strength and are of enormous stature, as effulgent as the moon's beams, possessing fair complexions, voices as deep as the muttering of clouds and who are extremely valiant. Their arms are long and like iron bars, O King of the Asuras, such are the people of that island, who are as powerful as thou wouldst wish to see on earth.'

"Hearing the words of Narada, Ravana said :—

"'O Divine Sage, why are the people of that island so strong and how did such mighty beings come to live in that place? O Lord, do thou relate everything to me at length. The whole world is ever seen by thee like a fruit in the palm of the hand!'

"Hearing the words of Ravana, the blessed Sage said :—

"'O Lord of the Rakshasas, the people of that island constantly worship Narayana with their whole being. Their hearts and minds are ever set on Him and, having given their lives and souls to Narayana alone, they have been blessed with that abode and dwell on Sweta-dwipa. Those who die in battle at the hands of Shri Narayana, Bearer of the discus and Preserver of the World, go to the celestial region. O Friend, neither by sacrifice, penance, excellent gifts nor by any other pious act does one attain to that region full of bliss.'

"Hearing these words of Narada, Ravana was amazed and

reflecting awhile, said :—'I will enter into conflict with these people ! '

" Thereafter, taking leave of Narada, he proceeded to Sweta-dwipa and Narada, pondering for a long time, curious to witness that encounter, speedily left for that island, he being fond of mischief and conflict.

" O Prince, Ravana, with his Rakshasas, advanced on Sweta-dwipa, rending the four quarters with his leonine roars, and Narada preceded him to that island that was difficult of access even to the Devas.

" There the Pushpaka Car of the mighty Ravana was assailed by adverse winds so that it was unable to stand against them and was tossed about like a straw, nor could it remain stationary on account of the furious blasts. Then Ravana's counsellors said to him :—

" ' O Lord, we are beside ourselves and overcome by fear ; it is not possible for us to remain here, how then shall we be able to fight ? '

" Speaking thus, the Rakshasas fled away in all directions ; then Ravana sent away his aerial car decorated with gold with the Rakshasas and, assuming a terrible form, entered the island alone.

" Thereafter, as he was approaching, he was observed by many women of that white island, who, drawing near, took hold of his hand and smiling, said :—

" ' Why hast thou come hither ? Who art thou ? Who is thy sire ? Who has sent thee, tell us all candidly ? '

" Than Ravana, enraged, answered :—

" ' I am the son of the Sage Vishravas and my name is Ravana ! I have come hither in order to fight but I see no warrior here ! '

" When the wicked-minded Rakshasa had spoken thus, the maidens laughed gently, but one of them, incensed, suddenly took hold of Ravana as one would a child and, as if in play, tossed him to and fro to her companions, saying :—

" ' See, I have caught an insect, how wonderful it is with its ten hands, twenty arms and its colour resembling a heap of antimony ! '

" Thereafter, they passed him from hand to hand in play, each

spinning him with her fingers and Ravana, worn out by being handled thus, grew exceedingly angry and bit the hand of one of those fair ones, who, being in pain, let him go, whereupon another, seizing the powerful Rakshasa, rose into the sky. Then Ravana, in fury, tore her with his nails and being dropped by that damsel, the night-ranger, terrified, fell into the waters of the sea, as a mountain peak when shattered by a thunderbolt.

"O Rama, those youthful women of Sweta-dwipa again caught hold of the Rakshasa and began to fling him to and fro. At that moment, the illustrious Sage Narada, observing Ravana's plight, was astonished and, laughing loudly, began to dance with delight.

"O Great King, desirous of receiving death at thy hand, the wicked Ravana bore Sita away. Thou art Narayana, the Wielder of the Conch, discus and mace. Thou dost bear the lotus, the thunderbolt and the bow in thine hands. Thou art Hrishikesha and art adorned with the Shrivatsa Mark, Thou art the Maha-Yogi, ever worshipped by the Devas and Thou dost confer fearlessness on Thy devotees. Thou hast assumed a human form in order to slay Ravana. Dost Thou know thy Self to be Narayana, O Blessed One, do not forget thy real Self, recollect that Thou art the true Self; Brahma Himself has declared Thee to be the Mystery of all mysteries!

"O Prince of the Raghus, Thou art the Three Gunas, the Three Vedas, The Three Regions, that of the Celestials, of men and the region under the earth, Thou dost sport in the three divisions of time, Thou art conversant with the science of archery, music and medicine, Thou art the Destroyer of the enemies of the Gods. In days of yore, Thou didst traverse the Three Worlds in three strides. Thou art born of Aditi and art the younger brother of Indra, born to bind Bali. O Foremost of the Gods, the purpose of the Devas has been accomplished! The wicked Ravana with his sons and kinsmen has been slain; the Rishis, who have piety as their wealth, and all the Gods are gratified. O Chief of the Immortals, all this has been brought about by Thy grace!

"Sita is the personification of Lakshmi and arose from the earth; for thy sake, she was born in the House of Janaka. Bringing her to Lanka, Ravana protected her with care as his

own mother. O Rama, I have related the whole story to thee, the immortal Narada described it to me, having heard it from the Rishi Sanatkumara; Dashanana followed the instructions of Sanatkumara faithfully.

"Whoever listens to this narrative in faith and knowledge at the time of sacrifice, his offerings of food, becoming imperishable, reach the ancestors."

Hearing this divine theme, the lotus-eyed Rama, with his brothers, was greatly astonished and the monkeys, their eyes wide with delight, with Sugriva, the Rakshasas, Bibishana, the kings, their counsellors and the assembled Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras gazed on Rama with joy.

Then the highly effulgent Agastya said to Rama :—

"O Rama, we have all looked on Thee and been honoured by thee and now beg leave to depart."

Speaking thus and having received due homage, they returned whence they had come.

The sun having set, Rama, the foremost of men, bade farewell to the monkeys and their Sovereign and duly performed the Sandhya Rites; thereafter night having gradually set in, he entered the inner apartments.

CHAPTER 38

Rama takes leave of his Allies

HAVING been duly installed as king, Raghava spent his days directing all those things pertaining to the inhabitants of the city and country. After some time, he, with joined palms, addressed the King of Mithila in these terms :—

"O Lord, now that our happiness is assured by thy support, it being by virtue of thy great prowess that I have been able to slay Ravana, all those of the Houses of Ikshvaku and Mithila, everywhere, enjoy a felicity without parallel. Do thou return to thy capital after accepting these jewels; Prince Bharata will attend thee as thine escort."

"Be it so!" replied Janaka and prepared to depart, thereafter adding :—

"I am pleased with thee and thy conduct; as for the gems that thou hast heaped upon me, I bequeath them all to my daughter, O Prince!"

Janaka having departed, Raghava, with joined palms, respectfully addressed the son of Kaikeyi, his maternal uncle, the Prince Yudajita, saying:—

"This empire, I myself, Bharata and Lakshmana also, are at thy disposal, O Lion among Men. The King, thine aged sire may be grieving on thy behalf and thy return this day will delight him, O Lord. Lakshmana will follow thee as thine escort after thou hast accepted wealth and gems of every kind."

Acquiescing to his request, Yudajita answered "It is well! As for the pearls and gold, do thou retain them forever!" Thereafter, the son of Kaikeya paid obeisance to Rama, keeping him on his right hand and after receiving homage, he departed, followed by Lakshmana as Vishnu by Indra at the time of the destruction of Vritra.

Having bade farewell to his maternal uncle, Rama embraced his friend, Pratardana, the King of Kashi, and addressed him in these words:—

"Thou hast proved thy friendship and devotion to the full, O Prince, as witnessed by the campaign undertaken with Bharata.[1] Now return this day to the enchanting City of Benares of which thou art the support and which is surrounded by great walls and magnificent gateways."

Speaking thus, the virtuous Kakutstha, rising from his throne, held him in a close embrace for a long time, thereafter permitting him to take his leave. Bidding farewell to the King of Kashi, Raghava, the increaser of Kaushalya's joy, speedily returned to his own city in safety.

Having dismissed Kasheya, Raghava smilingly addressed courteous words to the hundred monarchs present and said to them:—

"Your loyalty has been unshakable and your affection enduring; through the grace of your devotion and the prowess of magnanimous warriors such as you are, that insensate and perverse wretch, Ravana, has been slain! It is your prowess that

[1] A commentator explains that at the time Rama was fighting with Ravana, the King of Kashi and Bharata went to his aid.

has destroyed him, I was merely the occasion of his destruction in the fight with his forces, his sons, his ministers and his kinsfolk. Hearing that the daughter of King Janaka had been borne away in the forest, the great-hearted Bharata summoned you all. Your devotion has been unanimous, O Princes of great soul, but your stay here has been prolonged and I now wish to assure myself of your safe return."

Then the kings, greatly delighted, answered him saying :—

" By the grace of heaven thou hast triumphed, O Rama, and hast regained thy kingdom ! By divine grace, thou hast recovered Sita ! By divine grace, thy foe is vanquished ! To behold thee victorious and delivered from thine enemies, O Rama, was our most ardent desire and is now our supreme satisfaction ! The praises thou hast heaped upon us are natural to thee, O Thou whose merits are such that we cannot match them with our tributes. We are about to take leave of thee but thou wilt ever remain in our thoughts ! O Long-armed Warrior, we shall return full of devotion to thee. Mayest thou, O Great Prince, ever hold us in affection."

" Be it so ! " replied Rama and the kings, highly delighted paid obeisance to Raghava with joined palms, eager to return home and, having been duly honoured by him, went to their own countries.

CHAPTER 39

Rama loads his Allies with Gifts

THOSE magnanimous princes departed joyfully on their countless elephants and horses whose tread shook the earth. Many army divisions, full of ardour, had come to the aid of Raghava under Bharata's command with their regiments and squadrons. Thereafter, in the pride of their strength, those monarchs said :—

" We did not see Rama's adversary, Ravana, on the battlefield ; Bharata called on us too late or those Rakshasas would assuredly soon have fallen under our blows. With the protection of the valiant Rama and Lakshmana we should have striven successfully without anxiety on the shores of the ocean."

Conversing on this and other matters, those kings, full of joy returned to their kingdoms, those mighty empires that were prosperous, happy, abounding in silver and grain and overflowing with treasure. Reaching their capitals safely, those monarchs, anxious to gratify Rama, paid him homage by sending him every kind of precious object: horses, carriages, jewels, elephants intoxicated with ichor, rare sandalwood, celestial ornaments, gems, pearls, coral, lovely slave girls, coverings made of goats skin and a variety of chariots.

The mighty Bharata, Lakshmana and Shatrughna, having accepted those gifts, took their way back to the capital and, returning to the ravishing City of Ayodhya, those lions among men handed all those objects of great price to Rama, who, receiving them, joyfully bestowed them on Sugriva, who had fulfilled his duty, and also on Bibishana and the other Rakshasas and the monkeys, by whose aid he had attained victory, and those monkeys and titans decorated their heads and arms with the jewels that Rama had given them.

Thereafter, the Sovereign of the Ikshvakus, that warrior of the great car, he whose eyes resembled the petals of the lotus, Rama, seating Hanuman and Angada on his knees, said to Sugriva :—

" This Angada, thine illustrious son, and the Son of the Wind, thy minister, O Sugriva, both of whom are endowed with wisdom and devoted to our interests, merit every kind of honour and, on thine account also, O King of the Monkeys."

With these words, the illustrious Rama took off some extremely rare ornaments from his breast and decorated Angada and Hanuman with them.

Thereafter Raghava addressed the foremost of the monkey leaders—Nila, Nala, Kesharin, Kumuda, Gandhamadana, Sushena, Panasa, the valiant Mainda and Dvivida, Jambavan, Gavaksha, Vinata and Dhumra, Balimukha, and Prajangha, Samnada of great valour, Darimukha, Dadhimukha and Indrajanu, and in a sweet voice, consuming them with his glance as it were, in gentle accents said :—

" You are my friends, my brothers, my very Self! It is you who have saved me from misfortune, O Dwellers in the Woods! Happy is King Sugriva to possess such excellent friends! "

Uttering these words, that lion among men bestowed jewels upon them in accord with their desserts as also diamonds of great price and then embraced them all. Thereafter they drank of fragrant honey and partook of choice viands, roots and fruits and, sojourning there for a month, such was their devotion to Rama, that it seemed to them that but an hour had passed. Rama too spent the time happily in the company of the monkeys, who were able to change their form at will, and the extremely powerful titans and bears of great energy.

In this way the second month of autumn passed and the monkeys and titans savoured delights of every kind in that city belonging to the Ikshvakus that was full of allurements and, during the time they were thus entertained, by the grace of Rama's affectionate regard, the hours flew by happily for them.

CHAPTER 40

Rama takes leave of the Bears, Monkeys and Titans

IN this way, the bears, monkeys and titans passed their time with Rama, and thereafter the mighty Raghava said to Sugriva :—

" Return to Kishkindha, My Friend, which may not be conquered by the Gods or Asuras themselves. With thy ministers, rule over thine empire without hindrance. O Mighty King, thou shouldst look on Angada with supreme affection as also Hanuman and the great-hearted Nala, Sushena thy valiant father-in-law, and Tara the foremost of warriors, the invincible Kamuda and Nila who is full of strength, the energetic Shatabali, Mainda, Dvivida, Gaja, Gavaksha, Gavaya, the mighty Sharabha and the King of the Bears the indomitable Jambavan. Look also with affection on Gandhamadana, the agile Rishabha, the Plavamgamas Suptala, Kesharin, Shumbha and Shankashuda, all these magnanimous ones, who in order to serve my cause were ready to give up their lives ; look on them always with friendliness and never cause them pain."

Having spoken thus to Sugriva, whom he embraced again and again, Rama said affectionately to Bibishana :—

" Do thou rule Lanka faithfully ; thou art conversant with

thy duty, this is my conviction and also of those in the capital, the Rakshasas and thy brother Vaishravana. Give no place in thy soul to evil, O King! Just monarchs are assured of earthly prosperity. Think ever of me and Sugriva, mine ally, O Prince, and in perfect contentment go hence without anxiety!"

Hearing Rama's words, the bears, monkeys and Rakshasas cried, "Excellent! Excellent!" praising Kakutstha again and again, saying :—

"Thy wisdom, O Long-armed Hero, thy wonderful valour, thine extreme goodness, O Rama, has ever rendered thee the equal of Swyambhu!"

While the monkeys and the titans were speaking thus, Hanuman, bowing to Raghava, said :—

"I shall ever hold thee in the greatest affection, O Prince, my devotion is thine forever, O Hero, nor shall I give mine allegiance to any other object. As long as thy story is told in the world, assuredly life will remain in my body, O Valiant Rama. The Apsaras will recount thine history and all thy divine exploits to me, O Joy of the Raghus, O Lion among Men, and, listening to them, O Great Hero, the nectar of thy deeds will dispel all mine anxieties, as the wind chases away a flock of clouds."

As Hanuman was speaking, Rama rose from his marvellous throne and, embracing him tenderly, said to him :—

"Undoubtedly so will it be, O Best of Monkeys, as long as my story is current in the world, so long will thy fame endure and life remain in thy body. For every service thou hast rendered me, I would give up my life and still remain thy debtor, O Monkey. In mine heart, the memory of what thou hast done for me will ever abide, O Hanuman; it is in times of misfortune that one has recourse to those whom one has benefited."

Thereafter, taking from his neck a string of pearls from which an emerald as bright as the moon hung, Raghava placed it round Hanuman's and, with that rope of pearls falling on his breast, the monkey appeared as radiant as Mount Sumeru when the moon passes over the summit of that golden peak.

At a signal from Hanuman, those powerful monkeys, having placed their heads at the feet of Raghava, rising one after the other, went away.

Sugriva, who held Rama in a firm embrace, and the virtuous Bibishana were shaking with sobs and all were weeping, their eyes brimming with tears, beside themselves, distracted with grief as it were, on leaving Raghava. Overwhelmed with gifts by the magnanimous Rama, each returned to his own country, as souls leave the body. Titans, bears and monkeys, after bowing to Rama, the Increaser of the glory of the Raghu Race, their eyes filled with tears, caused by that separation, took the road to their own countries.

CHAPTER 41

Rama dismisses the Pushpaka Chariot

HAVING said farewell to the bears, the monkeys and the titans, the long-armed Rama began to live happily with his brothers.

One day, at noon, that great Prince Raghava heard a melodious voice speaking from the sky, saying :—

" O My Friend Rama, look on me and know, O Prince, that it is I, Pushpaka, who come from Kuvera's abode. At his command I have returned from his palace ; it is he, O First of Men, who has told me to place myself at thy service, saying :—

" ' Thou hast been won by the magnanimous Prince Raghava in the fight when he struck down Ravana, that invincible Monarch of the Titans. I experienced supreme felicity on the slaying of that wretch with his forces, sons and kinsfolk. Having been made captive in Lanka by Rama, the Paramatman, do thou go and serve him as a vehicle, O Friend ! It is I who command thee ! It is my supreme desire that thou shouldst carry that hero, the Joy of the Raghu Race, round the world ; go without anxiety ! '

" Obedient to the behests of the illustrious Dhanada, I have reached thee without difficulty and place myself at thy disposal. Inaccessible to all beings, at Dhanada's will, in obedience to thy commands I come to surrender my power to thy service."

Hearing these words, the valiant Rama answered the Pushpaka Car in the sky, that had returned to him, saying :—

"O Most wonderful of chariots, O Pushpaka, welcome to thee; Dhanada's generosity must not find me wanting!"

Thereafter the long-armed Raghava paid homage to Pushpaka with roasted grain, flowers and fragrant perfumes, saying:—

"Go now, O Pushpaka, wherever thou desirest but come again whenever I call thee to mind! Go by the path of the Siddhas, O Friend, and let no harm come to thee. Mayest thou not suffer any collision in thy fantastic journeyings in space, such is my will!"

Rama, having dismissed the aerial car with due homage, Pushpaka replying 'So be it,' went wheresoever it desired and, when that chariot of pure soul had disappeared, Bharata, with joined palms, addressed his elder brother, the Joy of the House of Raghu, saying:—

"O Hero, thou who hast the soul of a God, under thy rule one beholds beings who are not of the human race speaking frequently, nor is there any disease among men and their days are passed in peace; even the aged do not die and women give birth without pain, whilst all enjoy good health. A real felicity is to be seen among the citizens and, in the rainy season, Parjanya lets loose the nectar of immortality; soft auspicious and balmy breezes blow and the people of town and country all exclaim 'May such a king reign over us long', O Prince!"

Hearing these gracious and flattering words spoken by Bharata, Rama, the foremost of monarchs, was supremely gratified.

CHAPTER 42

The Felicity enjoyed by Rama and Sita

HAVING dismissed the Pushpaka Chariot, which was encrusted with gold, the long-armed Rama entered the Ashoka Grove that was rendered beautiful by Sandal, Agallocha, Mango, Tunga and Kalakeya Trees with groves of Devadaru on all sides, whilst Champaka, Aguru, Punnaga, Madhuka, Panasa and Asana Trees adorned it and radiant Parijatras blazed like smokeless fires. Lodhra, Nipa, Arjuna, Naga, Saptaparna, Atimuktaka,

Mandara and Kadali Trees screened it with a web of thicket and creepers; Priyangu, Kadamba, Bakula, Jambu, Dadima and Kovidara Trees embellished it on every side with their magnificent flowers, marvellous fruits of celestial fragrances, divine nectar, tender shoots and buds. Heavenly trees of graceful shape, thick with heavy foliage and enchanting blossom were humming with intoxicated bees. Kokilas, Bhringarajas and other birds of varied plumage, their heads crowned with pollen from the Mango Trees, added to the beauty of those marvellous woods. Some of the trees had the brilliance of gold or resembled tongues of flame, others were as dark as collyrium and everywhere only flowers of sweet fragrance and wreaths of blossom of all kinds were to be found.

Pools of various shapes, filled with limpid water on which tufts of flowering lotus and water-lilies floated, were approached by steps made of rubies. Trees in full flower adorned the banks which re-echoed to the call of Datyuhas and Shukas and the cries of geese and swans. That grove was enclosed by flat rocks of differing forms within which were many grassy glades of the sheen of emerald and pearl, and these were adorned by trees rivalling each other in the profusion of their blossom, the earth beneath being heaped with flowers, resembling the sky full of stars, so that it appeared like the garden of Indra or Chaitaratha created by Brahma.

Such was Rama's pastoral retreat with its arbours filled with countless seats and grassy couches inviting one to rest; and the Increaser of Raghu's joy entered that magnificent Ashoka Grove and seated himself on a throne of great splendour which was decorated with innumerable flowers and covered with a carpet of Kusha Grass.

Taking Sita by the hand, Kakutstha gave her delicious wine made of distilled honey to drink, as formerly Purandara had offered to Sachi. Thereafter pure viands and fruits of every kind were brought by servants, whilst lovely Apsaras, skilled in the arts of singing and dancing, began to perform in the Prince's presence and troops of Nymphs and Uragas, surrounded by the Kinneris intoxicated with wine, danced before Kakutstha, and the virtuous Rama, the most captivating of warriors, delighted those ravishing and charming women.

Seated by Vaidehi, he was radiant with splendour and resembled Vasishtha at the side of Arundhati. In this way, in the joy that possessed him, Rama, like unto a God, each day prepared some new delight for Sita, the Princess of Videha, who was like unto the daughter of a Celestial Being.

While Sita and Raghava sported thus for a long time, the flowery season, that yields perpetual enjoyment, passed away and, as those two tasted every kind of felicity, Spring appeared once more. One day, having fulfilled the functions of state, that virtuous Prince returned to his palace where he spent the rest of the day. On her side, Sita, having worshipped the Gods and performed her morning duties, offering her services to all her mothers-in-law without distinction, thereafter adorned herself with marvellous jewels and re-joined Rama, like unto Sachi when re-united with that God of a Thousand Eyes as he returns to his City Trivishtapa.

Beholding his consort glowing with beauty, Raghava experienced an unequalled delight and exclaimed " It is well ! " then he addressed the lovely Sita, who resembled a daughter of the Gods, and said :—

" Now, O Vaidehi, that thou dost bear a child in thy womb, what dost thou desire, O Lady of lovely hips ? What pleasure can I prepare for thee ? "

Smiling, Vaidehi answered Rama, saying :—

" O Raghava, I wish to visit the sacred retreats of the Rishis of rigid penances, who dwell on the banks of the Ganges where they subsist on fruit and roots, and there I will throw myself at their feet, O Lord. O Kakutstha, it is my supreme desire even to pass a night in the hermitage of these ascetics who live on fruit and roots."

Then Rama of imperishable exploits gave her permission to do so, saying :—

" Be at peace, O Vaidehi, to-morrow without fail, thou shalt go there ! "

Having answered Maithili, born of Janaka, in this wise, Kakutstha went to the central court surrounded by his friends.

CHAPTER 43

Rama informs himself concerning current Rumours from his Friends

HAVING entered there, the King was surrounded by entertaining companions accustomed to the exchange of humorous experiences, Vijaya, Madhumatta, Kashyapa, Mangala, Kula, Suraji, Kaliya, Bhadra, Dantavakra and Sumagadha, and they beguiled the magnanimous Raghava with amusing tales of every kind amidst great merriment.

Raghava, however, during some narrative, enquired of Bhadra, saying :—

" O Bhadra, what do they say of me in the town and country ? What do they say of Sita, Bharata and Lakshmana ? What do they say of Shatrughna and Kaikeyi our mother ? Kings are always the subject of criticism whether they are in the forest or on the throne."

On hearing Rama's enquiry, Bhadra, with joined palms, answered :—

"Amongst the inhabitants of the city, nought but what is good is spoken of thee, O King, above all they tell of thy victory over Dashagriva, whom thou didst slay, O Dear Prince ! "

At these words of Bhadra, Raghava said :—

" Tell me all truthfully without reserve, what reports, good or ill, do the people of the city circulate regarding me ? When I learn of them, I shall endeavour to do what is meet in the future and eschew what is evil. Tell me all in full confidence without fear. Laying aside every scruple, relate all the rumours current about me in the kingdom ! "

Thus exhorted by Raghava, Bhadra, with joined palms, in profound reverence, addressed that mighty hero in measured tones, saying :—

" Hear, O King, what the people are saying, be it good or ill, in the highways, markets, streets, woods and parks—' Rama has achieved the impossible by throwing a bridge over the sea which to our knowledge was never done by his predecessors nor even

by the Gods and Danavas together. With his foot-soldiers and cavalry, he has destroyed the invincible Ravana and has made the monkeys, bears and Rakshasas subject to him. Having slain Ravana in the fight and recovered Sita, Raghava, having mastered his anger, has taken his spouse into his house again. What pleasure can his heart experience in possessing Sita, whom Ravana formerly held in his lap, having borne her away by force? How is it that Rama was not filled with aversion for her after she had been taken to Lanka and conducted to the Ashoka Grove, where she was left to the mercy of the titans? We shall now have to countenance the same state of affairs regarding our own wives, since what a king does, his subjects follow!'

"These are the sayings current everywhere among the people of town and country, O King."

At these words, Raghava, stricken with grief, asked, "Is it thus that they speak of me?"

Then all, bowing to the ground in reverence, answered the unfortunate Raghava and said :—

"It is true, O Lord of the Earth!"

Having heard their unanimous testimony, Kakutstha, the Scourge of His Foes, dismissed his companions.

CHAPTER 44

Rama summons his Brothers

HAVING dismissed his companions, Raghava began to ponder within himself and thereafter said to the doorkeeper who stood near :—

"Go speedily and seek out the son of Sumitra, Lakshmana of auspicious marks and the fortunate Bharata and the invincible Shatrughna."

At Rama's command, the janitor paid obeisance with joined palms and went to Lakshmana's abode which he entered unchallenged and there, having saluted the magnanimous prince, he said :—

"The King desires to see thee, do thou go to him without delay!"

"It is well!" answered Saumitri and, in obedience to Raghava's command, he ascended a chariot and hastened to the palace. When he had departed, the doorkeeper approached Bharata and, saluting him in a like manner, said :—

"The king respectfully requests thy presence!"

Hearing these instructions issued by Rama, Bharata, rising swiftly from his seat, started out hurriedly on foot. Beholding the virtuous Bharata going away, the messenger speedily approached Shatrughna's abode and, with joined palms, addressed him, saying :—

"Go quickly, O Prince of the Raghus, the king wishes to see thee; Lakshmana has already preceded thee as also the renowned Bharata."

At these words, Shatrughna descended from his throne and, bowing to the ground, went to rejoin Raghava.

Meantime the messenger having returned, paid obeisance to Rama and made it known to him that his brothers had come. Learning of the youthful princes' arrival, Rama, who was deeply troubled, with a downcast mien, sad at heart, said to the doorkeeper :—

"Make haste and usher them into my presence! Mine existence depends on them, they are my very life's breath!"

At this command from that Indra of Men, the princes, attired in white, bowed with joined palms and entered respectfully. On beholding Rama, who resembled the moon in eclipse or the sun that the dusk robs of its splendour, whose eyes were filled with tears and who looked like a lotus bereft of its brilliance, they placed their heads at his feet and then stood silent. Thereupon the mighty Rama, shedding tears, having raised them up, clasped them in his arms and said to them :—

"Be seated! You are my whole wealth, you are my very life! It is with your assistance that I attained a kingdom and now rule, O Princes!"

Thus spoke Kakutstha and all, attentive and deeply moved, wondered what words he might be about to address to them.

CHAPTER 45

Rama commands Lakshmana to take Sita to the Hermitage

ALL having taken their places full of sadness, Kakutstha, his features stricken, said to them :—

"Hear me all of you, may good betide you ! Do not let your attention wander ! This is what people are saying about me concerning Sita ! The inhabitants of the city as also those of the country censure me severely and their criticism pierces my heart ! I am born in the Race of the illustrious Ikshvakus and Sita belongs to the family of the great-souled Janaka. My Dear Lakshmana, thou knowest how, in the lonely forest, Ravana bore Sita away and that I destroyed him. It was then that the thought came to me regarding the daughter of Janaka, 'How can I bring Sita back to Ayodhya from this place ?' Thereupon, in order to re-assure me, Sita entered the fire in my presence and that of the Gods, O Saumitri ! Agni, the Bearer of sacrificial offerings, witnessed to Maithili's innocence and Vayu also, who was then journeying through space, and Chandra and Aditya proclaimed it formerly before the Gods and all the Rishis, that the daughter of Janaka was without fault. The Gods and Gandharvas testified to her pure conduct in Lanka, where Mahendra placed the proofs in my hand, further I knew from my own inner being that the illustrious Sita was innocent. It was then that I took her back and returned to Ayodhya. Since then a great sadness, on hearing the censure of the people of town and country, has filled my heart. Whoever it may be, if his ill fame be current in the world, he falls to a lower state, so long as the defamatory rumours exist. Dishonour is condemned by the Gods ; honour is revered in the world and, it is on account of fair repute, that great souls act. As for me, so greatly do I fear dishonour that I would renounce my life and you yourselves on its account, O Bulls among Men, how much more therefore is it incumbent on me to separate myself from the daughter of Janaka. See therefore in what an ocean of grief I have fallen ! There is no misfortune greater than this ! To-morrow, at dawn,

O Saumitri, take my chariot with Sumantra as thy charioteer and, causing Sita to ascend it, leave her beyond the confines of the kingdom.

"On the further side of the Ganges, the magnanimous Valmiki has his hermitage of celestial aspect situated by the Tamasa; it is in a solitary spot that thou shouldst leave her, O Thou who art the Joy of the House of Raghu. Go quickly, O Saumitri, and carry out my behest. Do not discuss it in any way; go therefore, O Saumitri, it is not the time for observations. Any resistence on thy part will cause me extreme displeasure. Yea, I swear to thee by my two feet, by my life, that those who seek to make me alter my resolve in any way or oppose my desire, I shall deem to be mine enemies. If you are subject to me and hold me in reverence, then obey me and take Sita away from here this very day. Formerly she appealed to me saying, 'I wish to visit the sacred retreats of the banks of the Ganges', let her wish be fulfilled!"

Having spoken thus, the virtuous Kakutstha, his eyes filled with tears, re-entered his apartments escorted by his brothers, his heart riven with grief, sighing like an elephant.

CHAPTER 46

Lakshmana takes Sita away

When the night had passed, Lakshmana, with a sad heart and downcast mien, said to Sumantra :—

"O Charioteer, harness swift horses to the most excellent of cars and, by the king's orders, prepare a comfortable and luxurious seat for Sita, she, in accord with the king's wish, under my charge, is to visit the retreats of the great Rishis of pious practices, therefore bring hither the chariot with all speed!"

Then Sumantra saying, "Be it so!" yoked some superb horses to a splendid chariot that was well furnished with cushions and, approaching Saumitri, the heaper of honours on his friends, he said :—

"The car is ready, let what must be accomplished be done, O Lord!"

At these words of Sumantra, Lakshmana re-entered the King's palace and, having approached Sita, that Bull among Men addressed her thus :—

"According to the wish that thou didst express to him, that Lord of Men, the king, has charged me to take thee to the desired retreats. At the request of our sovereign, I will conduct thee without delay to those excellent solitudes of the Rishis on the banks of the Ganges, O Divine Vaidehi. I shall take thee to those hermitages inhabited by the Sages."

At these words of the magnanimous Lakshmana, Vaidehi experienced supreme felicity, so greatly did the thought of the expedition please her and, having furnished herself with costly raiment and jewels of every kind, she prepared to depart, saying :—

" I shall give these jewels as also the excellent robes and various treasures to the wives of the ascetics."

" It is well ", said Saumitri, causing Maithili to ascend the chariot and, recollecting Rama's command, he went forward drawn by swift horses.

Thereafter Sita said to Lakshmana, the increaser of prosperity :

" I behold countless inauspicious omens, O Joy of the House of Raghu, observe how my left eye twitches and all my limbs tremble, further my mind is confused and I feel extremely restless whilst all my courage has ebbed away, O Saumitri. The earth appears deserted, O Large-eyed Prince, can thy brother be happy, O Thou who art so devoted to him ? May all be well with my mothers-in-law without distinction, O Hero ! May all beings in town and country be happy ! "

Thus, with joined palms, Sita, the divine Maithili prayed, and Lakshmana listening, bent his head and, though his heart was contracted with grief, he cried in joyous accents, " Mayest thou too be happy ! "

Meantime they reached the banks of the Gaumati and rested in a hermitage, and the following day, at dawn, Saumitri, rising, said to the charioteer :—

" Harness the car speedily ! To-day, with great strength, I shall bear the waters of the Bhagirathi on my head, as did Tryambaka."[1]

[1] Tryambaka—the Lord Shiva.

Thus commanded, the driver with joined palms, said to Vaidehi:—

"Mount!" and he gave rein to the horses yoked to the chariot, who were as swift as thought, whereupon she, hearing the voice of the charioteer, ascended that excellent car. Thereafter the large-eyed Sita accompanied by Saumitri and Sumantra reached the Ganges, that destroys all sin and, arriving there at noon, beholding the waters of the Bhagirathi, the unfortunate Lakshmana began to weep openly in his profound distress and the virtuous Sita, in her extreme solicitude, observing Lakshmana's misery, enquired of him, saying:—

"Wherefore art thou groaning? We have reached the banks of the Jahnavi, the object of my desires for a long time and, at the moment of rejoicing, why dost thou cause me pain in this wise, O Lakshmana? O Bull among Men, is thy grief on account of these two days absence from Rama, thou who art ever in attendance on him? Rama is dearer to me than life, O Lakshmana, yet I do not distress myself; do not behave like a child! Let us cross the Ganges and visit the Sages so that I may distribute the raiment and jewels. Having paid homage to the great Rishis, which we owe to them and, passing one day there, we shall return to the city. My heart is impatient to see Rama again, whose eyes are like the petals of a lotus, whose chest is like a lion's, that foremost of men!"

At these words of Sita's, Lakshmana, wiping his beautiful eyes, hailed the ferrymen and they, with joined palms, said "The boat is ready!"

Eager to cross over that splendid river, Lakshmana boarded the skiff, and his mind pre-occupied, took Sita across the Ganges.

CHAPTER 47

Lakshmana tells Sita she has been repudiated

The younger brother of Raghava, having first assisted Maithili to board it, entered the well-furnished boat ready to depart, thereafter he said to Sumantra, "Wait here with the chariot" and, overcome with grief, he commanded the craft to set sail.

Arriving at the farther bank of the Bhagirathi, Lakshmana, with joined palms, his face bathed in tears, said :—

"A stake has been driven into my heart by the noble and virtuous Rama, which will bring universal censure upon me. Death were better for me this day, verily death would be preferable to the mission on which I am engaged, which the world will condemn. Forgive me and do not impute this offence to me, O Illustrious Princess."

Thereafter, making obeisance, Lakshmana threw himself on the earth. Seeing him weep, paying her homage and calling on death, Maithili, alarmed, said to Lakshmana :—

" What is this ? I do not understand anything ; tell me the truth, O Lakshmana, why art thou agitated ? Is the king well ? Tell me the cause of thy grief ! "

Thus questioned by Vaidehi, Lakshmana, his heart filled with anguish, with bowed head, choked with sobs, addressed her saying :—

" Having learnt in open council that he was the object of severe censure in the city and country on thine account, O Daughter of Janaka, Rama, his heart riven, returning home told me of it. I am unable to repeat the things spoken in confidence to me, O Queen. Although thou art blameless in mine eyes, the king has repudiated thee. Public condemnation has perturbed him ; do not misunderstand the matter, O Goddess. I am to leave thee in the vicinity of the sacred hermitages. The king has commanded me to do so on the pretext of satisfying thy desire. The ascetics' retreats on the banks of the Jahnavi are sacred and enchanting, do not give way to grief, O Lovely One. The foremost of Rishis, the supremely illustrious Sage Valmiki was a great friend of thy sire, King Dasaratha. Taking refuge under the shadow of the feet of that magnanimous One and living in chastity, be happy, O Daughter of Janaka. It is by remaining faithful to thy Lord and practising devotion to Rama in thine heart that thou shalt, by thy conduct, acquire supreme felicity, O Goddess."

CHAPTER 48

Lakshmana leaves Sita on the Banks of the Ganges

HEARING Lakshmana's harsh words, the daughter of Janaka, overcome with despair, fell to the ground but, regaining consciousness after a time, her eyes bathed in tears, she addressed him in broken accents, saying :—

"Assuredly this body of mine has been created for misfortune and is its supporter from this time forward. What sin can I have committed in days gone by or whom did I separate from her husband, that I, who am virtuous and chaste, should be cast off by the king ?

" Formerly I lived in the forest following in Rama's footsteps and was content in the misfortune in which I found myself, O Prince, now, how can I, abandoned by all, live in solitude, O dear Lakshmana ? To whom shall I confide the affliction that has overwhelmed me ? What can I say to the ascetics, O Lord ? For what sin, for what reason, am I repudiated by the magnanimous Raghava ? I may not yield up my life in the waters of the Ganges, lest I bring the royal line to an end ! Therefore do what thou hast been commanded, O Saumitri, leave me to my wretched plight ! It is for thee to carry out the king's behests, yet hear me—do thou with joined palms pay homage to all my mothers-in-law and, having worshipped his feet, address the king. With bowed head, speak to them all, O Lakshmana, and do thou also say to the king, who is ever fixed in his duty, ' O Raghava, thou knowest I am truly pure and that I have been bound to thee in supreme love, yet thou hast renounced me in fear of dishonour, because thy subjects have reproached and censured thee, O Hero. Thou shouldst, however have spared me, since thou art my only refuge.' Further, thou shouldst say to the king who is established in righteousness, 'As thou dost act in regard to thy brothers, so shouldst thou act in regard to thy subjects ; this is pre-eminently thy duty and will bring thee immeasurable renown ; by its observance thou wilt enjoy the fruits of the earth ! As for me, I am not distressed on mine own

account, O Prince of Raghu, it is for thee to keep thy fair name untarnished! The husband is as a God to the woman, he is her family, and her spiritual preceptor, therefore, even at the price of her life, she must seek to please her lord.'

" Repeat these words to Rama, it is all I ask of thee. Having borne witness that I am far advanced in pregnancy, do thou depart."

So did Sita speak and Lakshmana, sad at heart, bowed to the earth without being able to answer her. Thereafter he circumambulated her sobbing aloud and, after reflecting awhile, said :—

" What hast thou said, O Beautiful Princess, I have never raised mine eyes to thy face and have ever but looked on thy feet, O Irreproachable One. How should I, in his absence, dare to gaze upon the one Rama has abandoned in the lonely forest ? "

With these words, he paid obeisance to her and re-entered the boat. Boarding the skiff, he urged the ferryman on, saying :—

" Cross to the farther shore."

Beside himself with grief, in deep affliction, he, having reached the other bank proceeded in his swiftly moving chariot, turning round again and again to gaze on Sita, who, as if bereft of all support, was wandering about distraught on the farther side of the Ganges. Her eyes fixed on the chariot and on Lakshmana, now far distant, Sita was overcome with grief, and, crushed by the weight of her misfortune, the illustrious, noble and virtuous woman, seeing herself without a protector in the forest, that re-echoed to the cry of peacocks, a prey to despair, burst into loud sobs.

CHAPTER 49

Valmiki offers Sita his Protection

BEHOLDING Sita who was sobbing, the sons of the Rishis ran to seek out the blessed Valmiki of rigid penances and, having paid obeisance to the feet of that great ascetic, the children of the Sages informed him that a woman was weeping nearby, saying :—

" O Lord, a lady resembling Shri, whom we have never before

seen and who must be the consort of some great man, her features distorted, is lamenting in the vicinity of the hermitage! O Blessed One, thou wilt surely deem her to be a goddess fallen from heaven! Verily the most lovely of women, in deep distress, appeared before us on the bank of a river, shedding scalding tears, overcome by grief. In this misfortune that was assuredly not merited, she is alone and without a protector. We do not know the lady but do thou receive her with kindness for she is close to this retreat and has come to take refuge with thee."

Valmiki, that Prince of Sages, being aware of everything by virtue of his asceticism, ascertaining the truth of their words, with rapid steps went to where the Queen was weeping, and, as he strode forward, the disciples followed that illustrious Muni.

Bearing the Arghya in his hands, proceeding on foot, the sagacious Valmiki reached the banks of the river and beheld Raghava's beloved consort lamenting like one bereft. Thereafter, having consoled her by virtue of his holiness, the great ascetic addressed her in a sweet voice, saying :—

" O Virtuous Lady, thou art the daughter-in-law of King Dasaratha, Rama's beloved consort, the daughter of Janaka! O Faithful One, by virtue of my meditations, the cause that brings thee here has been revealed to me. O Auspicious One, I am fully aware of thy purity, for all that comes to pass in the Three Worlds is known to me. By my spiritual vision, I am convinced of thy chaste conduct, O Daughter of Janaka; thou art under my protection, O Vaidehi, take comfort! Not far from mine hermitage there are many female ascetics established in pious practices, they will care for thee as for their own daughter, O Dear Child. Now accept the Arghya and trust in me, giving up all anxiety. Do not grieve but look on this as thine abode."

Hearing these excellent words from the Sage, Sita, paying obeisance to his feet, with joined palms, accompanied the ascetic.

Beholding the Sage approaching, followed by Vaidehi, the female ascetics came out to meet them and, filled with delight, said :—

" O Foremost among the Sages, be thou welcome; it is long since thou hast visited us, we bow down to thee, what are thy commands? "

Hearing their words, Valmiki answered :—

" This lady is Sita, the consort of the virtuous Rama, she is the daughter-in-law of King Dasaratha, the chaste daughter of Janaka. Though innocent, her husband has renounced her, we should all therefore protect her ; she is worthy of our affection ! Such is my wish, who am your spiritual preceptor ; at my behest, do ye pay her every honour."

Having placed Sita in the charge of those female ascetics, the great and illustrious Sage Valmiki, followed by his disciples, returned to his hermitage.

The following Traditional Verses appear here in the original text

THUS has this ancient tale been narrated in its entirety, may good betide you ! May the might of Vishnu increase !

Those who have installed Shri Rama, who is the colour of a blue lotus, in their heart, will achieve success, nor will they ever experience defeat !

May the rains come when they are needed ; may the earth bring forth a rich harvest of grain and may the land be free from disorders. May the brahmins be without anxiety and just.

May prosperity reign in due time and the monsoons never fail. May Raghunath ever triumph and Shri ever reign.

May the kings of the earth protect their subjects in accord with justice. May the cows and the brahmins prosper. May all the worlds be happy.

May good fortune attend the King of Koshala, who is an ocean of virtue ; may good fortune attend on that monarch born of the Sovereign of the World.

May good fortune attend on Punyashloka,[1] the Knower of the Veda and the Vedanta, who appears in the form of a dark-coloured cloud causing delusion to human beings.

May good fortune attend the King of the City of Mithila, the close companion of Vishvamitra, the personification of prosperity in a gracious form.

May good fortune attend on the Blessed Rama, whose subjects

[1] Vishnu.

are full of joy, who is, with his brothers and Sita, ever devoted to his sire.

May good fortune attend on the One who is constant and noble, who dwelt in and abandoned Saketa (Ayodhya) and wandered about Chittrakuta worshipped by the self-controlled.

May good fortune attend on my Guru, who, bearing the bow, the arrow and the sword, was ever worshipped with devotion by Janaki and Lakshmana.

May good fortune attend on that King of the Vultures who dwelt in the Dandaka Forest, who is the enemy of those who oppose the Gods, who is a great devotee and a granter of liberation.

May good betide him who is exalted by Sattwa, who is extremely approachable, who is perfect in virtue and who desired to partake of the roots and fruits offered to him in reverence by Shabari.

May good fortune attend on the destroyer of Bali, he of supreme steadfastness, the fulfiller of the desire of the Monkey King, whose companion was Hanuman.

May good fortune attend him who is resolute in combat, the foremost of the conquerors of the Rakshasas, the blessed Hero of the Raghus, who passed over the ocean by a causeway.

May good fortune attend on the Blessed Rama, King of Kings and Princes, who returned to the celestial city and was installed there with Sita.

May good fortune attend on him who was honoured by the foremost Acharyas and all the great Sages of old engaged in prayer, benediction and blessings.

CHAPTER 50

Sumantra seeks to console Lakshmana

HAVING seen the Princess of Mithila conducted to the hermitage, a profound anguish seized the unfortunate Lakshmana, and that hero said to Sumantra, who drove his car repeating the sacred formulas[1] :—

[1] Literally " The Mantra Charioteer ".

" See into what affliction Sita's plight has thrown Rama! What could be sadder for Raghava than to have to renounce the daughter of Janaka, a chaste wife? It is evident to me that fate has separated Raghava from Vaidehi! O Charioteer, destiny is inexorable! Raghava, who, in his wrath, slew the Gods, Gandharvas, Asuras and Rakshasas, is under the sway of destiny. Formerly Rama, at his father's command, dwelt in the vast and lonely Dandaka Forest for fourteen years, but more painful and cruel to me seems the repudiation of Sita through listening to the calumny of the people. What justification was there, O Suta, for this dishonourable procedure consequent on the ill-considered reports regarding Maithili? "

Hearing these words uttered by Lakshmana, the loyal and sagacious Sumantra answered :—

" Do not grieve about Maithili, O Son of Sumitra, O Lakshmana, it was formerly predicted by the brahmins to thy Sire. Assuredly Rama is destined to become extremely unhappy; misfortune is his lot! Undoubtedly that long-armed hero will be separated from all those he loves. Under the sway of destiny, that great man will renounce thee, Shatrughna and Bharata. Do not repeat to Bharata or Shatrughna what Durvasa uttered in reply to the king who was questioning him. It was in the presence of a large assembly when I was present, O Bull among Men, that the Rishi uttered these words, Vasishtha himself, with others, being there.

" Hearing the words of the Rishi, the foremost of men, Dasaratha, then charged me saying, ' Do not repeat anything that thou hast heard to others '—I have kept his command scrupulously and, as I see it, under no circumstances should I divulge the matter to any, yet, if I can trust thy discretion, O Dear One, then hear me, O Joy of the Raghus. If I repeat the secret formerly confided to me by King Dasaratha then it is fate and inevitable. It is on account of fate that a similar misfortune, the source of thy present distress, took place. Do not speak of it before Bharata or in Shatrughna's presence either."

When he heard those grave and portentous words of Sumantra's, Saumitri said to the charioteer, " Tell me the whole truth!"

CHAPTER 51

Vishnu is cursed by Bhrigu

THUS requested by the high-souled Lakshmana, the charioteer began to relate what the ascetic had said.

" Formerly a great Sage, named Durvasa, the son of Atri, passed the rainy season in Vasishtha's hermitage. Thy supremely illustrious Sire went there himself, desirous of beholding the magnanimous family priest and he observed the great ascetic, Durvasa, bright as the sun, radiant in his own effulgence, seated by the side of Vasishtha. Those two Sages, the foremost of ascetics, saluted him with respect and bade him welcome, honouring him with a seat, fruit and roots, and water wherewith to wash his feet. Thereafter he dwelt in their company and the illustrious Rishis there present, at noon, used to recount pleasing traditions, and once during their recital, the king, with joined palms, said to the magnanimous ascetic, the son of Atri :—

" ' O Blessed One, how long will my dynasty endure ? To what age will Rama live ? And my other sons, how long will they survive ? How long will the sons of Rama live ? Be so good as to tell me the destiny of my race, O Blessed Lord.'

" Hearing the words of King Dasaratha, the highly effulgent Durvasa began to speak thus :—

" ' Learn, O King, what happened formerly during the conflict between the Devas and Asuras. The Daityas, whom the Suras threatened, took refuge with the consort of Bhrigu and she, having given them a haven, they dwelt there in safety. Seeing them thus succoured, the Chief of the Gods, enraged, with his sharp-edged discus severed the head of Bhrigu's wife.

" ' Beholding the murder of his consort, Bhrigu, in his wrath, instantly cursed Vishnu, the destroyer of enemy hosts, saying :—

" ' " Since in thine insensate fury, thou hast slain my spouse, who should never have died thus, thou shalt take birth in the world of men, O Janardana, and there thou shalt live separated from thy consort for many years."

"'Having pronounced this curse, Bhrigu was overcome with remorse and his merits being exhausted by the malediction he had uttered, he began to propitiate that God, paying homage to the One who delights in penance and protects his devotees. Thereafter that God spoke, saying, "For the good of the worlds, I will be subject to thy curse."

"'This is how the illustrious Vishnu was cursed by Bhrigu in days of yore and descended on earth, becoming thy son, O Foremost of Monarchs. Renowned in the Three Worlds under the name of Rama, he has to undergo the dire consequences of Bhrigu's curse. He will reign in Ayodhya for a long time. Those who follow him will be happy and prosperous and, having reigned for eleven thousand years, Rama will go to Brahmaloka. Having performed many great sacrifices, distributing costly gifts, he, who may not be overcome by the most powerful beings, shall establish many dynasties and he will beget two sons by Sita.'

"Having related all concerning the past and future of his race to King Dasaratha, Durvasa fell silent, whereupon the king paid obeisance to the two magnanimous ascetics and returned to the city.

"This is what I was formerly told by the Rishi and I have kept it in my heart; none of these things could have happened otherwise. Sita's two sons will be installed in Ayodhya by Raghava, the words of a Sage never fail to be fulfilled. It being so, do not grieve either for Sita or for Rama, O Son of Raghu. Take courage, O Prince."

Hearing this remarkable speech of the charioteer's, Lakshmana experienced unsurpassed felicity and cried out, "Excellent! Excellent!"

Meantime while Lakshmana and the charioteer were thus conversing on the way, the sun set and they halted on the banks of the Keshini River.

CHAPTER 52

Lakshmana seeks out Rama

HAVING passed the night by the Keshini, Lakshmana, the Joy of the House of Raghu, rose at dawn and continued on his way.

At noon, that Prince of the Great Car entered the opulent City of Ayodhya, crowded with happy people. The extremely sagacious Saumitri, however, became exceedingly apprehensive, reflecting " On mine arrival, when I fall at Rama's feet, what shall I say to him ? " As he was thus anxiously pondering, Rama's residence, bright as the moon, rose before him, and the prince, dismounting at the door of the palace, his heart contracted, with bowed head entered without hindrance. Seeing his elder brother, Rama, seated on his throne in deep distress, Lakshmana's eyes were filled with tears and, seizing hold of his feet, his soul afflicted, with great reverence he offered obeisance to him and addressed him in plaintive accents, saying :—

" In accord with thy command, O Lord, I left the daughter of Janaka on the banks of the Ganges near the splendid retreat of the Sage Valmiki, following the counsel given to me. It is there at the entrance of the hermitage that I abandoned the chaste Sita and have returned to serve thee. Do not grieve, O Foremost of Men, it has been decreed by destiny. Assuredly those like thee, who are intelligent and wise, do not give way to despair. All growth ends in decay, those who rise high, fall, and all meetings end in separation ; death is the end of life. Therefore in regard to sons, wives, kinsfolk and wealth, detachment should be practised, for separation from them all is certain. Thou who art able to control the spirit by the spirit and the mind by the mind and all the worlds, O Kakutstha, how much more art thou able to control grief. Nay, nay, in similar circumstances, the foremost of men, like thyself, do not distress themselves. Assuredly thou wilt be censured anew, O Raghava, for giving way to grief on account of calumny. Undoubtedly the people will condemn thee. O Best of Men, thou who art so well endowed with firmness of purpose, give up this faint-heartedness and cease to grieve."

Hearing the words of the magnanimous Lakshmana, the son of Sumitra, Kakutstha, beloved of his friends, answered him in cheerful tones, saying :—

" It shall be as thou sayest, O Best of Men, O Valiant Lakshmana, I am gratified by the execution of my behests, O Hero. O Gentle Prince, my distress has been assuaged by thy felicitous words ; I shall be guided by them, O Saumitri."

CHAPTER 53

Rama tells Lakshmana the Story of Nriga

HEARING Lakshmana's remarkable speech that filled him with amazement, Rama replied :—

"Assuredly it would be difficult in these times to find a relative like thee, O Dear Brother! O Thou who bearest auspicious marks, who art gifted with intelligence and art one with me in thought, now learn all that is passing in my heart and, knowing it, do what I command thee.

" O Dear Saumitri, four days have gone by since I concerned myself with the interests of my people and my soul is tormented ; now call together my subjects, the family priests and also the ministers with all those to whose affairs attention must be given ! The king who does not fulfil his duties in regard to his people each day, undoubtedly falls into the darkest hell.

" It is related that formerly a monarch named Nriga reigned, who was illustrious, truthful, pure-hearted and devoted to the brahmins. Once at the time of a sacred pilgrimage to Pushkara, that monarch bestowed on the brahmins hundreds and thousands of kine with gilded horns, accompanied by their calves.

"And it came about that one cow with its calf, belonging to a poor brahmin, was accidentally given away and he, hungry and thirsty, searched in vain here and there for that cow for a long time. Finally, having reached Kankhala, he observed his cow in the abode of a brahmin and, though in good health, it had grown old. Thereupon that brahmin called the cow by name crying ' Shabali, come ' and the beast, hearing him, recognized the voice of that one who was stricken with hunger and followed him.

" Then the ascetic, in whose house the cow had been retained, speedily pursued him and, reaching that Rishi, addressed him in harsh tones, saying ' That cow belongs to me and was given me by the foremost of monarchs ; it was Nriga who bestowed her on me as a gift.'

" Thereupon a great quarrel ensued between those two learned brahmins, and wrangling, they both approached the one who had given away that cow, but though they waited there a long time, they were unable to gain admission to the palace. Having tarried there many days and nights, they became greatly enraged and those two illustrious ascetics, furious at not achieving their purpose, uttered the following dreadful malediction :—

" ' Since thou hast refused to grant us audience in order to settle our dispute, do thou become a lizard and remain invisible to all beings ; in that state thou shalt pass hundreds and thousands of years in a ditch ; when Vishnu, in human form, descends to earth among the Yadus, whose glory he will enhance, thou shalt be liberated from the curse ! He shall be named Vasudeva. When the Kali Yuga has come, Nara and Narayana will descend on earth to relieve her of her burden.'

" Having pronounced this curse on the king, the two brahmins fell silent and they both agreed to bestow the cow, who had become old and weak, on another brahmin.

" O Lakshmana, King Nriga is still suffering under that dreadful curse. The folly of not attending to the dispute between contestants is to be attributed to the king. Therefore let all those who have come for reasons of arbitration be ushered into my presence, though a king does not seek the fruit of duty fulfilled. Go now personally and see if anyone seeks audience with me."

CHAPTER 54

The End of the Story of Nriga

HEARING the words of the supremely effulgent Rama, the exceedingly sagacious Lakshmana, with joined palms, replied :—

" O Kakutstha, it was for a very trivial fault that the Twice-borns struck down Nriga, that royal Sage, with that dreadful

curse like unto the Rod of Yama. O Foremost of Men, what did King Nriga reply to those enraged ascetics when they condemned him to such suffering ?"

Thus questioned by Lakshmana, Raghava took up the tale again, saying :—

" O Gentle One, hear what that prince first did when he was struck down by the curse. Learning that the two Sages had departed, the king called together his ministers, citizens and chief priests and, in the presence of his subjects, said :—

" ' Hear me carefully ! Having pronounced a dreadful curse upon me, the Rishis Narada and Parvata have, with the speed of the wind, returned to the Region of Brahma. Let the youthful Prince Vasu, here present, be installed on the throne to-day. Let artisans construct three ditches, where I shall expiate the curse laid upon me by the brahmins, one proof against the rains, one against the cold and a third against the heat ; let this habitation be made comfortable and trees laden with fruit and bushes covered with flowers be planted round about, as also shrubs of every kind to lend shade. The precincts of these ditches should be pleasant and I shall pass the time agreeably there till the termination of my sufferings. Let flowers with a sweet fragrance be sown frequently for half a league on all sides !'

" Having made these arrangements, he installed Vasu on the throne and addressed him, saying :—

" ' My Son, be ever fixed in thy duty and rule thy subjects in accord with the laws of the Kshatriyas. Keep before thine eyes the curse the two brahmins pronounced upon me. Do not grieve on my account, O Foremost of Men. Destiny is just, O My son, it is destiny[1] that has plunged me in this affliction. What must happen will happen ; what we must pursue will be pursued ; what is to be attained will be attained, whether good or ill, according to the acts of a previous existence. Do not grieve, O My Son.'

" Having spoken thus to his son, the highly illustrious King Nriga descended into the constructed ditch in order to take up his abode there. Having entered that deep hole adorned with precious gems, the magnanimous Nriga suffered the curse that the two brahmins had pronounced on him in their anger."

[1] Karma—See Glossary.

CHAPTER 55

The Story of Nimi

"I HAVE related the cursing of Nriga in detail but, if thou so desireth, listen to the following story!"

On this, Saumitri said :—

"I never tire of hearing these marvellous tales, O King!"

Thus spoke Lakshmana, and Rama, the Joy of the Ikshvakus, began to recount many exceedingly instructive legends, saying :-

"There was once a king named Nimi, the twelfth son of the magnanimous offspring of the Ikshvakus and he was full of courage and truth. That highly valorous monarch founded a beautiful city, resembling that of the Gods, in the vicinity of Gautama's hermitage, and the name of that city was Vaijanta! It served as the residence of the royal Sage Nimi and, while he dwelt in that vast capital, he reflected 'I will perform a great sacrifice to gratify my sire!'

"Having invited his father, Ikshvaku, the son of Manu, he first welcomed Vasishtha, the foremost of Rishis; thereafter the Rajarishi Nimi, the Joy of Ikshvaku, invited Atri, Angira and also Bhrigu, that treasury of asceticism.

"Meanwhile Vasishtha said to Nimi, the foremost of royal Sages :—'I am already pledged to Indra, therefore wait for me till his sacrifice is completed.'

"Soon afterwards, the great ascetic Gautama undertook the sacrifice[1] whilst the mighty Vasishtha was officiating at Indra's ceremony.

"King Nimi, that foremost of men, having assembled the brahmins, celebrated a sacrifice in the vicinity of his city on the side of the Himavat Mountain, its term exceeding five thousand years.

"Indra's sacrifice being completed, the blessed and irreproachable Sage Vasishtha returned to the king and offered himself as officiating priest. Observing that Gautama had, in the interval, filled that office, Vasishtha was transported with

[1] In Vasishtha's place.

rage and, anxious to behold the king, sought out the monarch, but that day he lay in a deep sleep and the fury of the magnanimous Vasishtha burst forth anew, so that he began to curse the king, who was unaware of his presence there, saying :—

" ' Since thou didst choose another and have failed to treat me with due respect, O King, thy body will be rendered lifeless ! '

" Thereupon the king awoke and, hearing the curse pronounced against him, in a transport of rage, said to the son of Brahma :—

" ' When I was unconscious and asleep, thou, beside thyself with anger, hast subjected me to the fire of thy wrath like unto the Rod of Yama ! For this, be assured thy body too, O Brahmarishi, shall be bereft of sensation for a long time.'

" Thus both dominated by anger, the foremost of kings and the chief of the ascetics, mutually cursed one another and they, whose powers were equal to the Gods, were both instantly deprived of their bodies."

CHAPTER 56

The Cursing of the Nymph Urvashi

HAVING heard this story, Lakshmana, the Slayer of His Foes, with joined palms, addressed the effulgent Rama, saying :—

" O Kakutstha, how did that Twice-born One, worshipped by the Celestials, and the king, having cast off their bodies, regain them once more ? "

Thus questioned by Lakshmana, Rama, having truth for his prowess, answered :—

" Following on their mutual cursing, those two virtuous Ones, that Sage among monarchs and the foremost of ascetics, having discarded their bodies, lived in their subtle forms. Thereafter, the great Rishi Vasishtha, desirous of regaining his physical shape, sought out his sire, and that virtuous Sage in his subtle body, paid obeisance to the feet of that God of Gods, the Grandsire, and addressed him, saying :—

" ' O Lord, through King Nimi's curse, I am deprived of my physical body, O Lord of Lords, O Mahadeva, I am merged in

air ! Those deprived of a body suffer great misfortune ; many righteous deeds may not be performed without a body, O Lord, by thy favour grant me another form ! '

" Then Brahma Swyambhu, whose powers are immeasurable, said to him :—

" ' Do thou enter the vital seed of Mitra and Varuna, O Thou illustrious One ! Thou shalt then be born without a mother, O Foremost of the Twice-born, and, endowed with great virtue, shalt regain thy state.'

" Thus spoke the divine Grandsire, and Vasishtha, circumambulating him, instantly left for Varuna's abode. At that time, Mitra, being worshipped by the foremost of the Celestials was reigning over Varuna's kingdom and the chief Apsara, Urvashi, came there by chance in company with her friends.

" Beholding the lovely Urvashi sporting in the waters, Varuna was seized with extreme delight and desired to unite himself with that nymph, whose eyes are as large as lotus petals and whose face was as radiant as the moon, but she, with joined palms, answered him saying :—

" ' Mitra has already invited me for this purpose, O Chief of the Gods ! '

" Then Varuna, being stricken with desire, said :—' Since thou dost not wish to be united with me, I shall loose my vital seed in the vessel created by Brahma, O Thou of lovely hips and beautiful complexion, thus shall my desire be satisfied.'

" Hearing this amiable speech, Urvashi was highly gratified and said to him :—

" ' Be it so, for my mind is fixed on thee, though my body belongs to Mitra, O Lord ! '

"At these words of Urvashi, Varuna discharged his powerful vital seed, that shone like fire, into the vessel. Then the divine Urvashi immediately sought out Mitra and he, in the height of anger, said to her :—

" ' Why didst thou desert me, who first chose thee ? For what reason hast thou taken another, O Thou without moral sense ? For this misdeed, I condemn thee to live in the world of men for a time ; thou shalt be united with the son of Budha, the royal Sage Pururavas, who rules over Kashi ! Go to him, O Sinful One ! '

" Then Urvashi, under the influence of that curse, went to Pratisthana to Pururavas, the beloved son of Budha, and she bore him a lovely child, Ayu, who was full of valour and became the father of Nahusha, the equal of Indra in glory, and when the Lord of the Celestials loosed his thunderbolt on Vritra and suffered eclipse,[1] Nahusha reigned in his stead for thousands of years.

" In consequence of this curse, Urvashi, of charming teeth, beautiful eyes and graceful brows, descended on earth where she passed many years and, the period of the curse having expired, she returned to the Region of Indra."

CHAPTER 57

The End of the Story of Vasishtha and Nimi

HEARING that wonderful and divine theme, Lakshmana, highly delighted, said to Raghava :—

" O Kakutstha, how did that Twice-born One and the king, adored by the Gods, who had been deprived of their physical bodies regain them again ? "

Thus questioned, Rama, that true hero began to relate the history of the magnanimous Vasishtha, saying :—

" O Prince of the Raghus, from that vessel in which the two mighty Gods had emptied their vital seed, two Sages were born, who were the foremost of Rishis. First Agastya appeared, that blessed ascetic, and he said to Mitra, ' I am not thy son ' and went away. O Lakshmana, the seed of Mitra formerly received by Urvashi, was to be found in the same vessel as that of Varuna's

"After a time Vasishtha was born in his turn, he who is worshipped by the Celestials, he is a God to the Ikshvakus and the mighty and highly effulgent Ikshvaku chose the irreproachable Vasishtha as his family priest for the good of our race, O My Friend ! I have thus described to thee how the magnanimous Vasishtha, who was previously bodiless, was re-born, now hear of the history of Nimi.

[1] Being overwhelmed by the sin of slaying a brahmin.

"Beholding the king deprived of his body, all the sagacious Rishis assisted him by the celebration of a sacrifice and the foremost of the Twice-born preserved the body of that first of monarchs by means of unguents, cloths and herbs with the help of the citizens and servants. At the conclusion of the sacrifice, Bhrigu said to Nimi, 'I shall restore thee to life, O King, I am gratified with thee.'

"Thereafter the Gods in their delight said to him :—'Choose a boon, O Royal Sage, where shall thy consciousness be set?'

"Thus spoke the Gods and Nimi's spirit answered :—

"'I wish to live in the eyes of all beings, O Illustrious Gods!'

"'So be it', said the Celestials, 'Thou shalt dwell in the eyes of all beings in the form of air. By thy grace, O Lord of the Earth, their eyes shall close again and again for rest when thou dost move about in the form of air.'

"Having spoken thus, the Gods returned to their own region and the magnanimous Rishis bore away Nimi's body to the sacrificial ground and began to rub it with great energy to the accompaniment of sacred formulas. And from the Arani,[1] thus violently agitated, a great and highly ascetic Being arose and, on account of him being born from an inanimate body, he was called Mithi, the King of Videha, and through this birth, he became the ancient Janaka.[2] It was from that Being of severe penances, who was called Mithi, that the race of Mithila originated. O Friend, I have told thee all without omitting anything concerning the curse and of the wonderful birth of that royal Sage and the foremost of kings."

CHAPTER 58

Shukra curses Yayati

THUS spoke Rama, and Lakshmana, the Slayer of His Foes, said to his mighty brother who was blazing with effulgence :—

"O Lion among Monarchs, this ancient history of the King

[1] Arani—The sticks used to light the sacred fire made of wood from the sacred fig-tree.

[2] Some Commentators explain that the name 'Janaka' meaning 'Sire' was given to the father or begetter of that great Race.

of Videha and the Sage Vasishtha is astonishing and wonderful, but why was King Nimi, a warrior full of valour, who had received initiation, unable to forgive the Rishi Vasishtha ? "

Thus questioned by Lakshmana, who was conversant with the Shastras, Rama, the foremost of warriors, answered his illustrious brother, saying :—

" O Valiant One, forgiveness is not always shown by men ! O Saumitri, hear with what resignation King Yayati bore the injuries done to him !

" King Yayati, the prosperity of his people, was the son of Nahusha—he had two wives, whose beauty was unequalled on earth. One was his favourite, Sharmishtha, born of Diti and the Daitya Vrashparvan, the other consort of Yayati was the daughter of Shukacharya and called Devayani, who was not beloved of her husband.

" Two sons of great beauty and amiability were born to them, Sharmishtha begot Puru and Devayani, Yadu. Puru was the favourite of his sire on account of his good qualities and also because of his mother, whereupon Yadu, much distressed, said to Devayani :—

" ' Thou, who art born in the family of the divine son of Bhrigu of imperishable exploits, art exposed to misery and contempt. It is intolerable, let us both enter the fire, O Queen, and let the King amuse himself for innumerable nights with the daughter of the Daitya. Or, if thou art able to endure it, then allow me to go my way. Do thou suffer this for I shall not brook it and have resolved to put an end to my life.'

"At these words from her son, who was weeping, Devayani, overcome by grief, highly indignant, called her Sire to mind and being thought upon, Bhargava instantly appeared before his daughter and, beholding her perturbed and beside herself, he enquired of her saying :—

" ' O Child, what is the matter ? ' Then Bhargava, his heart wrung, questioned her again and again, whereupon Devayani, enraged, answered her father, saying :—

" ' I shall enter the fire or drink poison or cast myself in the waters for I will not continue living. Thou dost not know to what misery and contempt I am subject ! When a tree is neglected, those who live thereon suffer. The king disregards

me and treats me with disdain, therefore thou too art disregarded!'

"At these words, which filled him with fury, the descendant of Bhrigu began to curse the son of Nahusha, saying :—

"'O Nahusha, since in the wickedness of thy heart, thou hast looked upon me with contempt, old age shall come upon thee and thou shalt become senile.'

"Having spoken thus and comforted his daughter, the descendant of Bhrigu, that highly illustrious Brahmarishi returned to his own abode.

"Having solaced his daughter, Devayani, and pronounced that curse on the king, the foremost of the Twice-born, Shukra, radiant as the sun, departed."

CHAPTER 59

Puru takes the place of his Father cursed by Shukra

"At these words of the enraged Shukra,[1] the unfortunate Yayati, overtaken by old age, said to Yadu :—

"'O Yadu, My Son, Thou art conversant with dharma, do thou take mine old age upon thyself and give me back my youth so that I may continue to give myself up to various enjoyments. O Foremost of Men, I am not yet sated with pleasures; once I am satisfied, I will resume my senility.'

"Hearing these words, Yadu answered that foremost of monarchs, saying :—

"'Thou hast excluded me from all matters, O King, and deprived me of thy proximity, let Puru, who feasts with thee, take this upon himself!'

"Hearing the words of Yadu, the king addressed Puru, saying :—

"'O Hero, do thou take mine old age upon thee.'

"On this, Puru, with joined palms, cried out :—

"'What good fortune is mine! Do thou favour me, I am at thy command!'

[1] Also called Bhargava.

" This response from Puru filled Nahusha with exceeding joy and, seeing himself freed from senility, he experienced an unequalled satisfaction. Thereupon, regaining his youth, he performed thousands of sacrifices and ruled the earth for innumerable years. After a long time, the king said to Puru :—

" ' Give me back mine old age, my Son, that I deposited with thee ! I placed this decrepitude upon thee and that is why I now reclaim it. Fear not, I am pleased with thy submission to my will and shall install thee as king in token of my satisfaction.'

" Having spoken thus to his son, Puru, King Yayati, born of Nahusha, addressed the son of Devayani harshly, saying :—

" ' Thou art an intractable Rakshasa born to me as a warrior, O Thou who dost disregard my behests ! Thou shalt never be king ! Since thou hast set me at nought, who am thy sire and thy spiritual director, thou shalt beget terrible Rakshasas and Yatudhanas ! Assuredly, O Thou of perverse soul, thy race shall not intermingle with the issue of the lunar race and will resemble thee in conduct.'

" Having spoken thus for the good of his realm, that royal Sage invested Puru with the supreme dignity and himself withdrew to the forest.

"After a long time, when the hour fixed had struck, he went to the Celestial Abode. Thereafter Puru ruled the empire with great equity and glory in the City of Pratishthana in the kingdom of Kashi.

" Yadu however begot thousands of Yatudhanas in the inaccessible City of Durga. In this wise, Yayati endured Shukra's curse in accord with the traditions of the Kshatriyas but Nimi never exercised forgiveness.

" I have related everything to thee, let us follow the example of those who accept all, so that we do not fall like Nriga."

As Rama, whose face resembled the moon, was speaking thus, the heavens were spangled with stars and the east became a roseate golden colour as if she had donned a robe covered with the pollen of flowers.

FIRST OF THE INTERPOLATED CHAPTERS

3rd SERIES

In the clear light of dawn, the lotus-eyed Rama performed the morning rites and took his seat in the council chamber on the royal throne in the company of the brahmins and citizens engaged in affairs of state. And the Priest Vasishtha with the Sage Kashyapa and others well versed in the rules of government, ministers conversant with the law, scriptures and ethics were of the assembly, which resembled Indra's Hall of Justice or Yama's or Kuvera's.

Then Rama said to Lakshmana, who was endowed with auspicious marks :—

" O Saumitri, O Long-armed Warrior, do thou go out to the city gate and summon those who have come here as petitioners."

Thereupon, according to Rama's command, Lakshmana, endowed with auspicious marks, went to the gate and called upon those who had come as complainants, but no one presented himself, for, under the rule of Ramachandra, there was neither poverty nor disease and the earth was filled with grain and herbs. Neither children nor the young nor those of middle age met with death, the kingdom was ruled with equity and there was no adversity. Thus during Rama's administration none was to be seen who was in need of justice.

Then Lakshmana, with joined palms, said to Rama :—" None has come as complainant," whereupon Rama, with a delighted heart, answered :—

" Do thou go once more, O Saumitri, and see if any presents himself! Under royal decree, unrighteousness must not prevail. Though laws inaugurated by me protect my subjects from harm, like the arrows I discharge, yet, O Long-armed One, do thou engage thyself in vigilance on their behalf."

Thus addressed, Lakshmana went forth from the palace and observed a dog sitting at the gate. Fixing its gaze steadfastly upon him, that dog was howling unceasingly and the valiant Lakshmana, beholding it in that plight, said :—

" O Fortunate One, what has brought thee hither, speak without fear ? "

Hearing the words of Lakshmana, the dog replied :—

" I wish to communicate something to Rama of imperishable exploits, who is the refuge of all beings and who confers fearlessness on all."

Hearing the dog's words, Lakshmana entered the beautiful palace to inform Rama and, having reported the matter to Ramachandra, he went out and said to the dog :—

" If thou hast anything true to say then come and inform the king ! "

Hearing the words of Lakshmana, the dog said :—

" Since we are vilely born, we may not enter the temple of a God, the palace of a king or the abode of a brahmin, nor may we go where there is fire, Indra, the sun or the wind ! The king is the personification of virtue ; Shri Ramachandra is truthful, well versed in the science of warfare and is ever engaged in the welfare of all beings ; he is perfectly cognisant of the time and place to exercise the six qualities, a master of ethics, omniscient, all-seeing and is the delight of his subjects. He is the moon, the sun, Agni, Yama, Indra, Kuvera and Varuna. O Saumitri, do thou go and communicate to the king, the protector of his subjects, that without his permission I may not enter."

Thereupon the highly effulgent and noble-minded Lakshmana went into the palace and said to Rama :—

" O Long-armed One, the enhancer of Kaushalya's joy, I have carried out thy behests and shall relate everything to thee, hear me ! As a petitioner, a dog is at the gate awaiting thy pleasure."

Then Rama answered, saying :—

" Whosoever it may be, speedily bring him in ! "

SECOND OF THE INTERPOLATED CHAPTERS

3rd SERIES

HEARING the words of Rama, the sagacious Lakshmana immediately sent for the dog who stood before Rama, and he, beholding it, said :—

"Come, communicate what thou hast to say without fear!"

Thereupon the dog, whose skull was gashed, said:—

"The king is the protector of animals and their lord! He is awake when others sleep; by administering the law, the king protects dharma; without his support, his people perish. The king is the lord, the king is the father of all the world! He is Kala,[1] He is Yuga,[2] He is the creation which comprises all animate and inanimate beings; He is dharma because He supports all, for it is dharma that sustains the worlds, by dharma the Three Worlds are upheld; it is dharma that restrains the wicked; it is for this he is called Dharana;[3] dharma is greater than all and confers benefits after the death of the body; nought is superior to dharma in the world. O King, charity, compassion, reverence for the wise and absence of guile are the chief virtues that constitute dharma. They who follow dharma are happy in this life and in the next. O Raghava, O Thou of firm vows, thou art the authority of authorities. Thou art well known for such conduct as is followed by the pious. Thou art an ocean of good qualities and the abode of righteousness. O Foremost of Kings, if in mine ignorance I have said many things to thee, with bowed head I crave thy forgiveness; be not angry with me."

Hearing these words from the dog, that were full of wisdom, Rama said:—

"What shall I do for thee, speak without fear!"

Then the dog answered:—

"O King, it is by dharma that a king rules, it is by dharma that a king protects his subjects and becomes a refuge, delivering men from fear. Bearing this in mind, O Rama, do thou hear me. There is a brahmin named Sarvatha-siddha who lives on alms and who has all his desires satisfied. Through no fault of mine he has inflicted a wound on my head."

Hearing these words, Rama sent forth a messenger who brought Sarvartha-siddha there, and he, beholding Rama in the assembly of those effulgent and leading Sages, said:—

[1] Kala—Time.
[2] Yuga—The World Cycle.
[3] Dharana—The Supporter, Upholder.

" O Sinless King, for what purpose hast thou sent for me ? "

Then the king answered, saying :—

" O Brahmin, thou hast injured this dog. What offence did it commit that thou didst strike it severely with thy staff? Anger is a mortal foe ; anger is a sweet-spoken enemy in the garb of a friend ; anger is the first of passions and like unto a sharp sword ; anger bears away the essence of good ; it carries away all that is acquired by asceticism ; sacrifices, gifts and charity are all destroyed by anger, therefore it is proper to banish anger by every means. Passion runs wild on all sides like exceedingly wicked steeds. Satiated with all the objects of enjoyment, it is better to govern these appetites with patience. By mind, speech and sight, a man should engage himself in the well-being of others. He should give up aversion and injure no one. The harm that an uncontrolled mind can accomplish is beyond the range of a sharp sword or a serpent that has been trodden underfoot or a foe who has been provoked. Even the nature of one who has learnt humility cannot always be trusted ; a study of the Scriptures does not alter the innate character of a man, he who conceals his nature, will reveal his true self at a given moment."

Rama of imperishable exploits, having spoken thus, Sarvathasiddha, the foremost of the Twice-born, said :—

" O King, wandering about the whole day in search of alms, I became angry and struck the dog. It was seated in the centre of a narrow street and I requested it to move away ; thereupon moving with reluctance, it stood by the roadside. O Descendant of Raghu, at that time I was overcome with hunger and struck it for its perverse conduct. I am guilty, O King, do thou punish me, O Lord of Monarchs, do thou administer correction and I shall be released from the fear of hell."

Then Rama enquired of all his ministers, saying :—

" What shall be done now ? What punishment should be inflicted on him ? By administrating justice in accord with the crime, our subjects are protected."

Thereupon Bhrigu, Angiras, Kutsa, Vasishtha, Kashyapa and the other Rishis, ministers, leading merchants and Sages conversant with the Shastras, who were present there, said, "A brahmin is exempt from punishment," and the Sages, conversant

with the law, having spoken thus, those ascetics addressed Rama, saying :—

" O Raghava, a king is the ruler of all and thou above all, for thou art the Chastiser of the Three Worlds, the Eternal Vishnu."

They, having spoken thus, the dog said :—

" Thou didst solemnly enquire ' What shall I do for thee ? ' therefore if thou art pleased with me and dost wish to bestow a favour on me, do thou appoint this brahmin to be head of the holy assembly of the Kalanjava Monastery."

Thereupon the king instantly sanctioned the appointment, and the brahmin, honoured and gratified, mounted on an elephant, proceeded to occupy his new and dignified status.

At this Rama's counsellors were astonished and said :—

" O Thou of great effulgence, this brahmin has not been punished, rather hast thou favoured him with a boon ! "

Hearing the words of the ministers, Rama said :—" You do not know the secret of the matter, the dog knows it well ! " Thereafter, questioned by Rama, the dog said :—

" O King, I was formerly the head of the assembly of Kalanjava and after worshipping the Gods, feeding the brahmins and feasting the servants, male and female, I used to take my food. I duly administered all things and my mind was untouched by sin. I protected the articles belonging to the tutelary Deities carefully, cultivated virtue, followed dharma and engaged in the welfare of all beings. In spite of this, I have fallen into this wretched state. O Raghava, this brahmin is given to anger and impious, he injures others and is harsh and cruel, he will dishonour seven generations of his race. He will by no means be able to discharge the duties of the head of an assembly.

" He who wishes to see his children, friends and beasts fall into hell, is made chief of the Gods, cows and brahmins ! O Raghava, he perishes who deprives the brahmins, women or children of their legitimate possessions; one who misappropriates the offerings of the brahmins or the Gods, goes to the lowest hell."*

Hearing the words of the dog, the eyes of Rama opened wide

* This story seems to imply that if a man is appointed to a position of authority and does not discharge his responsibilities faithfully, he is in grave danger in future incarnations.

in astonishment. Thereafter the dog departed from whence it had come.

In its former birth it had been high-minded but was born in a degraded state in that existence. Repairing to the holy City of Kashi, that dog, desiring to leave its body in a sacred spot, thereafter undertook a waterless fast.

THIRD OF THE INTERPOLATED CHAPTERS

3rd SERIES

FOR a long time a vulture and an owl dwelt near the City of Ayodhya in a forest on a mountain, that was intersected by many streams, where cuckoos called and which abounded in lions, tigers and birds of every kind.

One day, the wicked vulture alleging that the owl's nest was his, began to quarrel with him, whereupon both said :—

" Let us seek out the lotus-eyed Rama, who is the king of the people and let him decide to whom the nest belongs."

Having thus agreed, the vulture and the owl, wrangling with one another, wrought up with ire, came before Rama and touched his feet. Beholding that Lord of Men, the vulture said :—

" O Preserver of humanity, thou art the foremost of the Devas and Asuras, O Resplendent One, in hearing and intelligence thou art superior to Brihaspati and Shukracharya. Thou art conversant with the good and evil karma of all creatures. In beauty thou resemblest the moon, in splendour the sun, in glory the Himalaya, in profundity the ocean, in prowess the Grandsire, in forbearance the earth, in speed the wind ; thou art the Spiritual Preceptor of all animate and inanimate beings and art endowed with every kind of wealth ; thou art illustrious, forgiving, invincible, victorious and master of all the scriptures and laws. O Foremost of Men, hear my plea ! O Lord of Raghu, I had built a nest for myself and this owl is now occupying it as his own, therefore, O King, do thou protect me ! "

The vulture, having said this, the owl spoke, saying :—

" True it is that in a king, there is to be found a portion of the

moon, of Indra, the sun, Kuvera and Yama but there is also a measure of man in him. Thou, however, art the all-pervasive Narayana Himself, Thou, impelled by thine own Self dost judge all creatures impartially, yet a certain gentleness is manifest in thee and therefore people say thou art endowed with a portion of the moon. O Lord, by anger, punishment and reward, thou dost remove the sins and dangers of thy subjects ; it is thine to give and withdraw, thou art the dispenser, destroyer and protector and art as Indra to us. In energy thou art as fire, irresistible to all creatures and, since thou dost spread thy lustre on all beings, thou art like the sun ! Thou resemblest the Lord of Wealth and art even superior to him, for prosperity resides in thee. Thou lookest on all creatures whether animate or inanimate with the same eye, O Raghava, and dost regard foe and friend alike, duly protecting thy subjects. O Raghava, those who have incurred thine anger are already slain, therefore thou art praised as Yama. O Foremost of Kings, since, in human form, thou art merciful and beneficent, people sing thy glory, thou who art intent on not harming men. The king is the strength of the weak and helpless, the eye of the blind and the refuge of those who seek shelter in him. Thou art also our Lord, therefore hear our plea! O King, entering into my nest, this vulture is oppressing me ; thou alone, O Foremost of Men, art the divine chastiser of creatures ! "

Hearing these words, Rama called for his ministers with those of King Dasaratha, Vrishti, Jayanta, Vijaya, Siddhartha, Rashtravarddhana, Ashoka, Dharmapala and the highly powerful Sumantra and others, who were well versed in the law, high-minded and conversant with the Shastras, intelligent, nobly born and skilled in counsel.

Thereafter summoning both, Rama, descending from his throne, enquired of the vulture :—" How long has this nest been made ? Tell me if thou dost remember it ! "

Then the vulture replied :—" From the time men were first born on earth and spread over the four quarters of the globe, I have been living in this nest."

Thereupon the owl said :—

"At the time when trees first covered the earth, this nest of mine was constructed."

Hearing these words, Rama said to his counsellors :—

" That assembly is not an assembly where there are no wise and elderly men, nor those who do not dwell on righteous topics. That religion is no religion where truth is not to be found and that truth is no truth where there is guile. Those counsellors are liars, who remain silent when they are well informed in any matter. He who does not speak either on account of passion, fear or anger, binds himself with a thousand nooses of Varuna and, at the expiration of a full year, is only released from a single sin."

Hearing these words, the ministers said to Rama :—

"O Thou of great intellect, what the owl has said is true, the vulture has spoken falsely. Thou art proof of this, O Great King, since the king is the final refuge of all, the root of the people and eternal dharma itself. Those punished by the king do not fall into a lower state, they are saved from hell and expand in virtue."

Hearing these words of the ministers, Rama said :—

" Hear what is related in the Puranas ! Formerly the sun, moon and firmament with its stars, the earth with its mountains and forests, the Three Worlds with all that moves and does not move were merged in the waters of the great ocean.

"At that time, Narayana existed as a second Sumeru and, in his belly, lay the earth with Lakshmi. Having destroyed the creation and entered the waters, the highly effulgent Vishnu, identical with the souls of creatures, lay asleep there for many long years. Beholding Vishnu asleep after the destruction of the worlds and, knowing all the entries to be obstructed, the great Brahma entered his belly. Thereupon a golden lotus sprang from Vishnu's navel, and that great Lord, the Creator, Brahma, rose therefrom and engaged in severe penances for the purpose of creating the earth, air, mountains, trees, men, reptiles and all other life-forms from the womb or egg.

" Thereafter, from the wax in the ears of Narayana, two valiant and dreadful Daityas, Madhu and Kaitabha were born. Beholding the Grandsire, they were greatly enraged and rushed upon him, whereupon Brahma, the Self-born cried out loudly.

"Awakened by that sound, Narayana engaged in combat with

Madhu and Kaitabha and slew them with his discus and the earth was drenched with their blood. Then, purifying it once more, Vishnu, the Preserver of the World covered it with trees and created medicinal herbs. Thus filled with the marrow of Madhu and Kaitabha, the earth was called Medini. It is for this that I hold this abode does not belong to the vulture but to the owl, O Counsellors, the owl having maintained that he built the nest when trees were first created, that is, before men appeared. This vicious vulture should therefore be punished, for this evil-minded one, having robbed another of its nest, is now oppressing him."

At that moment a voice was heard in the sky, saying :—

" O Rama, do not slay the vulture for it has already been reduced to ashes by the power of Gautama's asceticism. O Lord of Men, this vulture in a former birth was an heroic, truthful and pure king, by the name of Brahmadatta. One day a brahmin called Gautama, the very personification of Time, came to the house of Brahmadatta for food and said :—

" ' O King, I shall feed in thy house for more than a hundred years ! '

" Thereupon, with his own hands offering that effulgent brahmin water to wash his feet, the King Brahmadatta entertained him with due hospitality. Once, accidentally, flesh was mixed with the food of the high-souled Gautama and he, enraged, uttered a terrible curse, saying :—' O King, do thou become a vulture ! '

" The monarch thereupon replied :—' O Thou of great vows, do not curse me thus, be propitiated, it was in ignorance that this offence was offered by me, O Great One ! O Blameless One, do thou so act that this curse be rendered void ! '

" Recognizing that the offence had been unwittingly committed by the king, the ascetic said :—

" ' O King, a monarch shall be born under the name of Rama in the Race of Ikshvaku. O Foremost of Men, thou shalt be released from the curse when he touches thee.' "

Hearing these words from the sky, Rama touched Brahmadatta and he, giving up his vulture's form, assuming a beautiful body sprinkled with celestial perfumes, worshipped Rama and said :—

" O Thou conversant with piety, by thy grace I have been saved from a dreadful hell, thou hast verily brought the curse to an end for me ! "

CHAPTER 60

The Ascetics seek out Rama

As Rama and Lakshmana passed the time conversing thus, the temperate spring night drew on and, when the stainless dawn broke, Kakutstha, having performed his morning worship, went to the audience chamber to attend to affairs of state.

Then Sumantra approached him and said :—

" O King, there are some Sages who are waiting at the gate with Chyavana, the descendant of Bhrigu, at their head ; these illustrious Rishis seek audience with thee, O Great King, and, eager for thy sight, those dwellers on the banks of the Yamuna have sent me to announce their arrival."

Hearing these words, the virtuous Rama, conversant with his duty, said :—" Let those blessed ascetics, whose leader is Bhargava, enter." Thereupon, in deference to the king's summons, the chamberlain, with joined palms, bowing low, ushered in those eminent ascetics, numbering over a hundred, who were blazing in their own effulgence. Thereafter those magnanimous Sages, entering the palace, with their loshtas filled with holy water drawn from sacred places, carried various kinds of fruit and roots as an offering to the king, which Rama accepted with delight.

Then that long-armed prince said to those illustrious Sages :—

" Do you occupy these seats according to your pleasure."

Thus invited by Rama, those great Rishis took their places on the brilliant golden seats and, seeing them installed, Rama, with joined palms, paying obeisance to them, enquired of them saying :—

" For what reason have you come ? In my devotion I would feign know what I may do for you ? I am at your command O Illustrious Ones, and shall carry out all you desire with great delight. My whole kingdom and the life in my breast and all

that I am is at the service of the Twice-born ; this is the truth that I speak ! "

Hearing this speech, the magnanimous Rishis of severe penances, who dwelt on the banks of the Yamuna, cried out :— " Excellent ! " and with extreme delight, they added :—

" O Thou, the best of Men, none other on this earth would speak as thou hast done. Many monarchs, though supremely courageous and powerful, dare not engage themselves in an undertaking when they consider the difficulties ; thou, however, without even knowing in what the matter consists, in thy reverence for the brahmins, dost pledge thy word which thou wilt undoubtedly honour. It behoveth thee to deliver the Sages from a great peril, O Lord."

CHAPTER 61

The Story of Madhu

THEN Kakutstha enquired of those ascetics, who had spoken thus, saying :—

" Say what shall I do, O Munis, in order to dispel this danger for you ? "

At these words from Kakutstha, Bhargava replied :—

" Learn the cause of our fears and from whence they spring, O Prince ! Formerly in the Krita-yuga, a highly intelligent Daitya, the great Asura Madhu, the eldest son of Lola, who was well-disposed to the brahmins and protected all those who sought refuge in him, was united in an unequalled friendship to the supremely illustrious Gods. And Madhu, who was endowed with valour and ever fixed in his duty, received a marvellous weapon from Rudra, who held him in high esteem. Taking from his own trident, another of great power and beauty, that magnanimous One, well pleased, conferred it upon him and said :—

" ' Thou hast fulfilled thy duty in a remarkable degree, which has evoked my grace ! In the supreme delight that I now experience, I confer this excellent weapon upon thee. As long as thou dost not attack the Gods or the brahmins, O Great Asura, this

spear will remain with thee, otherwise it will vanish. Whoever rashly provokes thee to combat will be reduced to ashes by this weapon which, thereafter, will return to thine hand!'

"Having received this rare gift from Rudra, the great Asura prostrated himself before Mahadeva and said:—

"'O Lord, Thou who art the Chief of the Gods, O Blessed One, may this weapon ever remain in my family.'

"Thus spoke Madhu, and the Lord of all beings, Shiva, that great God, anwered him saying:—

"'Nay, that may not be, nevertheless since thy plea finds favour with me, it shall not have been uttered in vain; thy son shall inherit this weapon. As long as it is in his hand, he will be invulnerable to all beings, but only if it remains there.'

"Then Madhu, the foremost of the Asuras, having received that great and marvellous gift from the God, built himself a magnificent abode. He had a beloved wife, the fortunate and illustrious Kumbhinasi, who was born of Vishvasu by Anala, and she bore him a son full of vigour named Lavana. Cruel and perverse from infancy, he was ever engaged in harming others and, seeing the iniquitous conduct of his son, Madhu was incensed and grieved but he said nothing. After a time he left this world and entered Varuna's abode, having bequeathed the weapon to Lavana and instructed him in the nature of the gift.

"Now Lavana, due to the power of that weapon and his natural perversity, has become the scourge of the Three Worlds and particularly of the Sages, his might being equalled by the power of that weapon. Thou hast heard all, now it is for thee to decide, O Kakutstha, for thou art our supreme refuge.

"Many monarchs, O Rama, have been solicited by the Sages to deliver them from fear, but, O Valiant Prince, we have not found a protector. Learning that thou hadst destroyed Ravana with his infantry and cavalry, we have recognized thee as our saviour, O Dear Son. We know of no other king on earth capable of delivering us; we entreat thee to free us from the terror which Lavana inspires in us. This, O Rama, is the cause of our present fear; thou art able to dispel it; fulfil our desire, O Thou whose valour is unconquerable."

CHAPTER 62

Shatrughna asks permission to fight Lavana

SUCH was the speech of the ascetics, and Rama, with joined palms, enquired of them, saying :—

" On what does he live ? How does he conduct himself? Where does he dwell ? "

Raghava, having questioned them thus, all the ascetics informed him as to how Lavana sustained himself and said :—

" His food consists of all creatures, particularly the ascetics, his manner of life is savage and he constantly roams in Madhuvana. Having slain thousands of lions, tigers, antelopes, birds and even men, his daily food is their flesh, and that monster, like unto Antaka at the dissolution of the worlds, also devours all beings."

Hearing these words, Raghava said to those great Sages :—

" I shall slay that demon, have no fear." Having given his word to the ascetics of great effulgence, Rama, the delight of Raghu said to his three brothers who were present :—

" Who is brave enough to slay this Asura ? On whom shall the choice fall, on the valiant Bharata or the sagacious Shatrughna ? "

Listening to Raghava's words, Bharata answered :—" It is I who will slay him ! Let the task be entrusted to me ! "

Hearing Bharata, full of energy and courage, speak thus, Shatrughna, the younger brother of Lakshmana, rose from his golden seat and, bowing before that Lord of Men, said :—

" The long-armed Bharata has already proved his fortitude ; let him remain amongst us, O Joy of the Raghus. When Ayodhya was previously deprived of thy noble person, Bharata, concealing his sorrow in his heart, ruled the kingdom till the return of his lord. Undergoing innumerable hardships, O Prince, lying on a hard couch in Nandigrama, the supremely illustrious Bharata lived on fruit and roots, his hair matted and clothed in bark. Having endured such a test, that son of Raghu should not have to undergo further trials since I, thy servant, am here."

Thus spoke Shatrughna and Raghava said :—

" Be it so, O Descendant of Kakutstha, carry out my commands and I will install thee as king in the splendid capital of Madhu. O Long-armed Warrior, let Bharata stay here as thou wishest; thou art brave and experienced and well able to establish a kingdom with its flourishing provinces and a capital that is washed by the Yamuna, for he who, having destroyed a dynasty, does not install a king, goes to hell. As for thee, when thou hast slain the son of Madhu, Lavana of perverse ways, do thou govern his kingdom righteously if thou desirest to carry out my wishes. Do not question what I have said, O Hero, the younger brother should undoubtedly obey the elder. O Descendant of Kakutstha, receive the consecration at my hands with the traditional blessings pronounced by Vasishtha and the other brahmins."

CHAPTER 63

The Installation of Shatrughna

These words of Rama filled the valiant Shatrughna with confusion and he spoke with exceeding diffidence, saying :—

" O Lord of Men, these measures do not seem to me to be justified! How may a younger brother be installed when his elders yet live? Still it is imperative that I should submit to thy will, O Fortunate Prince, for it would be impossible for me to disregard any order of thine. I have heard from thy lips, O Hero, and the scriptures have taught me that one should never oppose the one in authority once he has spoken. My words were ill-advised when I said ' I will slay the redoubtable Lavana in the open field.' This unfortunate utterance places me in a serious dilemma, O Foremost of Men. One should not add anything when one's elders have spoken, for this is a moral taint and, in the next world, proves a cause of retribution. I shall not speak again, O Lord Kakutstha, for fear that a second observation draw punishment upon me. I shall do thy pleasure, O Foremost of Men, O Joy of Raghu, but do thou so order it that in mine interest this improper act be erased."

Thus spoke the brave and high-souled Shatrughna and Rama, greatly delighted, said to Bharata and Lakshmana :—

" Prepare everything for the installation with care. This very day I shall install that tiger among men, issue of the House of Raghu. At my command, summon the Purodhas, O Offspring of Kakutstha, and the citizens, Ritvijs and ministers."

Hearing the king's command, the great car-warriors, under the direction of the Purodhas, began the ceremony. Thereafter, the lords and brahmins entered the king's palace and the enthronement of the magnanimous Shatrughna was solemnly performed, to the great delight of Raghava and the city.

The fortunate Shatrughna, son of Kakutstha, having received the divine anointing, resembled a second sun, as Skanda when he was formerly enthroned by the inhabitants of heaven led by Indra.

Meanwhile Shatrughna being installed by Rama of imperishable exploits, the inhabitants of the city were highly delighted as also the illustrious brahmins, and Kaushalya, Sumitra and also Kaikeyi, who with the other queens, rejoiced in their royal residence.

Thereafter the Rishis, who dwelt on the banks of the Yamuna, on account of Shatrughna's enthronement, prophesied the death of Lavana.

Clasping the newly crowned one to his heart, Raghava, in caressing tones, thus enhancing his courage, said to him :—

" Here is an infallible shaft that overthrows hostile citadels ; by means of this thou shalt destroy Lavana, O My Dear Brother, Joy of the House of Raghu. It was fashioned, O Descendant of Kakutstha, when Swyambhu, the divine Ajita reposed on the waters out of sight of the Gods and Asuras, invisible to all beings. That God fashioned this arrow, the foremost of all, in order to slay those two perverse beings, Madhu and Kaitabha, for he was enraged against them, when he desired to create the Three Worlds despite all the Rakshasas.

" Having destroyed Madhu and Kaitabha, for the good of all beings with this marvellous weapon, Brahma created the worlds. I did not loose this dart formerly on Ravana, whom I wished to slay, O Shatrughna, for all creatures would have been greatly diminished thereby.

"As for the superior weapon bestowed on Madhu by the magnanimous Tryambaka for the destruction of his foes, Lavana, while he is ranging the regions in search of his favourite nourishment, leaves it in his dwelling where he honours it in various ways ; but when the desire for combat rises in him or he is challenged, that demon lays hold of that weapon and reduces his foes to ashes. O Foremost of Men, ere he returns to the city and while he is without his weapon, place thyself at the entry furnished with thy powerful shaft. Before he regains his abode, challenge that demon to combat, O Long-armed Warrior, and thou shalt overcome him. If thou actest in any other way, thou canst not slay him ; whereas using these means, O Valiant One, thou wilt exterminate him. Thou knowest all and how to eschew that weapon of irresistible force belonging to the ancient Shitikanta."[1]

CHAPTER 64

Shatrughna sets out to meet Lavana

HAVING spoken thus to Shatrughna, the offspring of Kakutstha, and encouraged him again and again, Rama, the Joy of the House of Raghu continued :—

" Here are four thousand horses, two thousand chariots, a hundred selected elephants and stalls furnished with every provision, also singers and dancers. O Foremost of Men, I give thee gold and silver coins; take with thee a quantity of gold and set out, having furnished thyself with supplies of weapons, food and conveyances.

" By words and gifts, do thou satisfy that well-nourished army that is cheerful, contented and disciplined, O Valiant Prince. Where there are neither riches, women nor kinsfolk, devoted servants will not be found, O Shatrughna. Having marshalled thy great army composed of people full of ardour, do thou go alone, bow in hand to the Madhu Wood. Act in such a manner that Lavana, the son of Madhu, is not aware that thou art approaching, seeking to enter into combat with him, that he may

[1] Shitikanta—The Lord Shiva.

be without suspicion ; there is no other means of slaying him. O Foremost of Men, he who approaches him with that purpose inevitably perishes under his blows. The summer having passed and the rainy season being at hand, thou shalt destroy the wicked Lavana for the hour will have struck !

" With the great Rishis at their head, send the troops forward so that they profit by the summer for crossing the waters of the Jahnavi. There thou shouldst take care to encamp the whole army on the river and thou, who art fleet of foot, shouldst go ahead with thy bow. Halt at the place indicated to you and establish the camps without obstruction so that no-one may have cause for complaint."

Having thus issued his orders and marshalled his army, Shatrughna circumambulated Rama, bowing to him, with joined palms, and in great humility, paid obeisance to Bharata and Lakshmana as also the family priest, Shri Vasishtha.

Having received permission from Rama to depart, that hero, the Scourge of His Foes, circumambulated him and went away. Ordering his army, comprising innumerable elephants and well-bred steeds to advance, that descendant of Raghu took leave of the king and set out on his mission.

CHAPTER 65

The Story of Saudasa who is cursed by the Sage Vasishtha

HAVING caused his army to halt after a month's march, Shatrughna started out alone with a rapid step. Two days later, that hero, the Joy of the Raghus reached the sacred hermitage of Valmiki, the foremost of retreats, and, with joined palms, paying obeisance to that magnanimous Sage, spoke thus :—

" O Blessed One, I desire to spend the night here where the mission of my elder brother has led me ; to-morrow, at dawn, I shall set out for the west."

Thus spoke the great-souled Shatrughna, and the foremost of Sages, smiling, answered him, saying :—

" Be thou welcome, O Illustrious Prince ! This hermitage, O dear Friend, belongs to the descendants of the Raghu Race also;

without hesitation, do thou accept a seat from me and water for thy hands and feet!"

Thereupon, Shatrughna, being honoured, accepted the fruits and roots for his repast and, being fed thereon till he was fully satisfied, then enquired of the great Rishi, saying :—

"Whose is this fertile area to the east of the hermitage, that has been created by sacrifice?"[1]

To this enquiry, Valmiki replied :—

"O Shatrughna, hear to whom this region formerly belonged! One of thine ancestors was the King Saudasa and, of that monarch was born Mitrasaha,[2] who was full of vigour and extremely virtuous. One day the valiant and righteous Saudasa, having followed the hunt, observed two Rakshasas wandering here and there, in the form of tigers, and those monsters were devouring thousands of antelopes in order to appease their insatiable appetites. Seeing those two Rakshasas, who had denuded the forest of deer, Saudasa was seized with violent anger and pierced one of them with a long dart. Having slain it, that foremost of men recovered his composure and, his anger dissipated, he gazed on the dead Rakshasa. Observing him contemplating his companion thus, the surviving demon, filled with a burning grief, said to him :—

"'Thou hast slain my companion who had done thee no harm, I shall revenge myself on thee one day, thou wretch!'

"Speaking thus, the Rakshasa disappeared.

"In the course of time, the son of Saudasa, Mitrasaha, came to the throne, and Saudasa undertook the Ashwamedha Sacrifice in the vicinity of this ashrama with Vasishtha as the officiating priest. This continued for many years and was of exceeding splendour so that it resembled one offered by the Gods. At the close of the rites, the Rakshasa, calling to mind his past grievance, assumed the form of Vasishtha and said to the king :—

"'Now the sacrifice has been completed, let flesh be brought speedily that I may eat without delay!'

"Hearing that Rakshasa, transformed into a brahmin, speaking thus, the king addressed his cooks, who were skilled in their art and said :—

[1] That is by the grain scattered during the sacrifice.

[2] In some versions, Viryasaha

" 'Speedily prepare Havis[1] and such savoury dishes of flesh that will please my Guru!'

"This command of that monarch bewildered the cooks, whereupon the Rakshasa, assuming their form, prepared a dish of human flesh which he brought to the king, saying, 'Here is a savoury dish made of flesh!'

"O Foremost of Men, the king, with his consort, Madayanti, presented those dishes brought by the Rakshasa, that were composed of flesh, to the Sage Vasishtha, and that ascetic, perceiving he had been offered human flesh, was transported with rage and began to pronounce a curse upon him, saying :—

" 'Since it has pleased thee, O King, to offer me a repast of this nature, it shall assuredly become thy food.'

"Thereupon Saudasa, incensed, in his turn took water in his hand and was about to curse Vasishtha when his wife restrained him, saying :—

" 'O King, since the blessed Sage is our spiritual Preceptor, it is not proper for thee to pronounce a curse upon him, a priest is like unto a God.'

"Then that virtuous monarch poured out that water charged with power and some fell on his feet, which became stained and, from that time the illustrious Saudasa became known as Kalmashapada.[2] Then that monarch, with his consort, having prostrated themselves before Vasishtha again and again, informed him of what the Rakshasa, under the shape of a brahmin, had done.

"Hearing from that foremost of monarchs of the vile act of the Rakshasa, Vasishtha addressed the king once more, saying :—

" 'The words that I have pronounced in anger may not be uttered in vain but I will grant thee a boon. Thou shalt be freed from the curse in twelve years and, by my favour, shall not remember what has passed, O Foremost of Men.'

"Having suffered the consequences of that curse, Saudasa, the Slayer of His Foes, recovered his kingdom and ruled over his subjects. O Descendant of Raghu, this is the beautiful site of that sacrifice performed by Kalmashapada about which thou hast enquired."

[1] Havis—Anything offered that has been cooked in ghee.
[2] Kalmashapada—Spotted Feet.

Having heard the dreadful story of that monarch, Shatrughna, paying obeisance to that great Rishi, entered the leaf-thatched hut.

CHAPTER 66

The Birth of Kusha and Lava

Now, during the night that Shatrughna passed in the leaf-thatched hut, Sita gave birth to two children and, at midnight, the youthful ascetics brought the pleasant and auspicious tidings to Valmiki, saying :—

" O Blessed One, Rama's consort has given birth to twin sons, do thou perform the rites that will preserve them from evil forces."

Hearing these words, the great Rishi went to see those newly-born Ones, who were as effulgent as the new moon and full of vigour, like unto twin offspring of the Gods.

Coming to where Sita was, on beholding those two infants, his heart was filled with delight and he performed the Rakshasa Rite.[1] Taking a handful of Kusha Grass with its roots, that Twice-born One, Valmiki, pronounced the formula of protection for the destruction of evil forces, saying :—

" Since they will rub the first born of the children with the Kusha Grass[1] blessed by the aid of Mantras, his name shall be Kusha and, as the last born will be carefully dried by the female ascetics with the roots of the grass, he shall be called Lava. Therefore those two shall be called Kusha and Lava and, by these names that I have given them, they will become renowned."

Thereafter, the female ascetics purified themselves and reverently received the grass from the hands of the Muni, applying it to the two children. The rite having been performed in the night, Shatrughna hearing the pleasant tidings, the names the children would bear, and Rama's praises, also that Sita had undergone this double and fortunate birth, approached the leaf-thatched hut where Sita lay and said :—

" O Mother, be thou happy ! "

Thus, for the magnanimous Shatrughna, that night of the

[1] To avert evil

rainy season in the month of Shravana passed joyfully and rapidly and, the next day at dawn, that great hero, having offered up his morning devotions, with joined palms paid obeisance to the Sage and resumed his journey.

After a march of seven days, reaching the banks of the Yamuna, he halted at the hermitage of Rishis of great renown, and that illustrious Prince listened to the pleasant and ancient legends of Chyavana of the line of Bhrigu and of other Sages. In this way, Shatrughna, the son of that foremost of monarchs, King Dasaratha, in great delight, passed the night conversing with the ascetics, of whom Kancana was the leader, on various themes.

CHAPTER 67

The Story of Mandhata

THE night having come, Shatrughna enquired of the son of Bhrigu, Chyavana, concerning the strength of Lavana, saying :—

" O Brahmin, how powerful is his weapon ? Who did Lavana formerly slay with that splendid shaft in combat ? "

Thus questioned by him, the extremely virtuous Chyavana answered the magnanimous Shatrughna, the Joy of the Raghus, saying :—

" O Son of Raghu, innumerable are his exploits ! Hear what befell a descendant of Ikshvaku. Formerly there reigned in Ayodhya, the valiant son of Yavanashwa, Mandhata, who was renowned in the Three Worlds for his prowess.

" Having placed the entire earth under his yoke, that monarch sought to conquer the Celestial Realm. Great was the fear of Indra and the Gods on beholding Mandhata's preparations, who wished to conquer the region of the Devas. Learning of his intention to share Indra's throne and kingdom, the God, who chastised Paka, addressed Yuvanashwa's son in propitiatory accents and said :—

" ' Thou dost not yet rule over the entire earth, not having wholly subjugated it, O King, yet thou aspirest to the celestial throne. When the whole earth is under thy dominion, then,

with thy servants, thine army and thy chariots, do thou take possession of the kingdom of the Gods.'

" Thus did Indra speak, and Mandhata answered him, saying :

" ' Who on the face of the earth has contested my domination ? ' Then the God of a Thousand Eyes said :—

" ' The Rakshasa named Lavana, son of Madhu, who dwells in the forest, has not recognized thine authority, O Irreproachable Warrior ! '

"At these extremely unpleasing words uttered by Indra, the king hung his head in shame, being unable to answer him. Thereafter, paying obeisance to the Thousand-eyed God, he departed with bowed head and returned to earth.

" Then that Prince, the Slayer of His Foes, concealing his anger, placed himself at the head of his servants, infantry and cavalry and marched against the son of Madhu in order to conquer him. And that foremost of men sent a messenger to Lavana to challenge him to combat, who, coming before him, covered the son of Madhu with abuses and, while he was still speaking, the Rakshasa devoured him.

"As his envoy failed to return, the king, enraged, assailed Lavana with a hail of arrows, whereupon the Rakshasa, taking up his trident, mockingly hurled it upon him in order to exterminate him and his followers, and the flaming trident, that formidable weapon, reduced the king, his servants, his infantry and cavalry to ashes and returned to the hand of its master.

" Thus did that great monarch perish with his footsoldiers and chariots. O My Friend, it was through the power of that trident, which is unsurpassed ! To-morrow at dawn thou shalt without doubt slay Lavana ere he has taken up his weapon ; thy victory is assured ! The worlds will be freed as a result of thine exploit. O Foremost of Men, I have now told thee all concerning the wicked Lavana ; it is on this account that Mandhata succumbed in his undertaking. To-morrow at dawn, O Magnanimous One, thou shalt undoubtedly slay him ! He will have set out in search of food without his trident. Thy victory is therefore assured, O Foremost of Men."

CHAPTER 68

Shatrughna encounters Lavana

WHILST Chyavana was recounting this story and all were wishing him an overwhelming victory, the night speedily passed away for the magnanimous Shatrughna.

Meantime as the cloudless dawn broke, the bold Rakshasa set out from the city eager to find food and, during this time the intrepid Shatrughna crossed the Yamuna and, bow in hand, took up his position at the gate of Madhupura.

At noon, that Rakshasa of evil karma returned laden with countless living beings and, beholding Shatrughna standing at the gate with his weapon, the demon enquired of him :—

" What wilt thou do with that weapon ? In my wrath, O Least of Warriors, I have devoured thousands of men like thee with their weapons ; it is death that brings thee here. I am not yet fully fed, O Vilest of Men, why hast thou come to cast thyself into my mouth, thou fool ! "

Thus did he speak, laughing loudly, and the courageous Shatrughna shed tears of rage and, in his fury, sparks of fire issued from all his limbs. Thereafter, in a transport of anger, he said to that ranger of the night :—

" I shall enter into single combat with thee ! I am the son of Dasaratha, the brother of the sagacious Rama, my name is Shatrughna, a veritable Shatrughna,[1] and it is my desire to slay thee that has brought me hither ! I wish to fight with thee, therefore be on thy guard ! Thou art the enemy of all beings ; thou shalt not escape me alive ! "

At these words the Rakshasa, sneering, answered the prince, saying :—

" It is my good fortune that has brought thee to me, O Insensate One. Rama slew my maternal aunt's brother, Ravana, on account of a woman, O Wretch. O Lord of Men, I have suffered the entire destruction of Ravana's family and it is because I have neglected to avenge them that thou art over-confident. I shall exterminate you all, O Vilest of Men, I shall

[1] Shatrughna—' Slayer of his Foes '.

sweep you all away like straws, both those who are already born and those still to be born. O Thou of vicious intellect, I accept thy challenge! Stay but a moment till I fetch my weapon, one suited to thy destruction!"

Thereupon Shatrughna instantly answered saying:—

"What, shalt thou escape me alive? He who has any wit does not allow a foe to go free who has come forth of his own accord. He, who, in his stupidity, suffers a foe to escape, perishes. Look long on the world, for, with my whetted shafts, I shall despatch thee to Yama's abode, thou the enemy of the Three Worlds and of Raghava."

CHAPTER 69

The Death of Lavana

At these words from the mighty Shatrughna, Lavana fell into a violent rage and cried out:—"Stay", striking his hands together and grinding his teeth, thereafter assailing that Lion of the Raghus with redoubled blows.

Thereupon Shatrughna, the Slayer of His Foes, answered Lavana of formidable aspect, who had addressed him thus, saying:—

"When others were slain by thee, I was not yet born, but to-day, pierced by my darts, do thou enter the region of Yama! May the Rishis and learned brahmins this day be witness of thy death in combat, O Wretch! When my shafts have consumed thee in the fight, thou who art a ranger of the night, the city and the country too will be at peace. As the rays of the sun penetrate the lotus, so shall the dreadful pointed arrows, loosed by mine arm, pierce thy heart."

Then Lavana, beside himself with anger on hearing these words, hurled a great tree on Shatrughna striking his breast, but he severed it into a hundred pieces, and the Rakshasa, finding himself foiled, seized hold of a large number of trees and hurled them on his adversary; then Shatrughna, burning with ardour, severed those innumerable trees, one by one, with three or four

well-seasoned crescent-shaped arrows and, thereafter, he let a shower of darts fall on the valiant Rakshasa without causing him to retreat. With a mocking laugh, Lavana, brandishing a tree, struck the head of that hero so that he fell insensible, and when that warrior fell, a great cry of "Ah ! Ah ! " arose from the Rishis, Devas, Gandharvas and also Apsaras.

Thereupon the Rakshasa, thinking Shatrughna to be slain, did not enter his house, though the opportunity presented itself and, seeing him lying on the earth, he did not go in search of his trident, but, reflecting, " He is dead," he began to collect his food.

Shatrughna, however, regaining his senses, in an instant took hold of his weapon and went to his place at the city gate once more, amidst the acclamations of the Rishis ; and he selected a celestial, infallible and marvellous arrow that illumined the ten regions with its brilliance and resembled lightning in its velocity. That shaft, smeared with sandalpaste of the colour of blood, wonderfully plumed, was greatly feared by the leaders of the Danavas, the mountains and also the Asuras, and, beholding that dreadful weapon, flaming like Time at the end of the world period, all beings were seized with terror. Then Devas, Asuras, Gandharvas and troops of Apsaras and the whole universe trembled and took refuge with the Grandsire of the worlds. Thereafter the Gods, beside themselves with fear, enquired of that Lord of Lords, the Bestower of Grace, the Grandsire of the Worlds, whether the universe were about to be destroyed. Hearing them speak thus, Brahma, the Grandsire, addressed them in soothing accents, that restored their serenity, saying :—

" Hear me, O Ye Gods, it is in order to destroy Lavana in combat that Shatrughna is armed with that weapon. O Foremost of the Gods, all are overwhelmed by the power of this eternal weapon forged by the primeval God, the Creator of the World. O My Children, that effulgent shaft which causes such terror was fashioned for the destruction of the demons, Madhu and Kaitabha, by the magnanimous God, Vishnu, who alone understands it. In reality, it is the primeval form of Vishnu Himself, therefore go and witness the death of the foremost of the Rakshasas, Lavana, under the blows of that valiant warrior, the younger brother of Rama."

At these words of that God of Gods, the Devas went to the place where the combat between Shatrughna and Lavana was in progress and that weapon of celestial effulgence, which Shatrughna held in his hand, appeared to all beings like the Fire that blazes forth at the dissolution of the worlds!

Beholding the firmament filled with the Celestial Host, the descendant of Raghu emitted a leonine roar and, thereafter, looked on Lavana again and again. On this renewed provocation from his adversary, the Rakshasa, enraged, stretched his bow up to his ear and that most skilled of archers discharged his great arrow on the breast of the enemy, that piercing it, entered the lower regions. Having penetrated into Rasatala itself, the celestial weapon, honoured by the Gods, immediately returned to that hero, the Joy of the Ikshvakus, and, pierced by Shatrughna's arrow, Lavana, that ranger of the night, fell like a mountain struck by lightning.

Thereafter, Lavana being slain under the eyes of the Gods, the mighty celestial trident returned to Rudra. When, with a single shaft, that hero of the Raghus destroyed the terror of the Three Worlds with his bow and marvellous arrow, he resembled that orb of a thousand rays which dispels the darkness.

Then the Devas, great Rishis, Pannagas and Apsaras cried out in chorus :—

" By good fortune, the son of Dasaratha has triumphed; fear is banished and, like a great reptile, Lavana lies stretched on the earth."

CHAPTER 70

Shatrughna establishes himself in the City of Madhu

LAVANA being slain, the Gods with their leaders, led by Agni, spoke to Shatrughna in affectionate terms, saying :—

" By good fortune, O Dear Child, thou art victorious; by good fortune, Lavana the Rakshasa is destroyed! O Lion among Men, O Pious One, do thou ask for a boon. The distributors of boons, those who desired thy triumph, are assembled here, O Long-armed Warrior, let not our presence prove fruitless! "

Hearing these words of the Gods, that long-armed warrior, Shatrughna, placing his joined palms to his forehead, answered humbly :—

"That I may enter into possession of this ravishing and picturesque city, constructed by the Gods, is my dearest wish ! "

Then the Celestials answered with delight, " Be it so ! this charming city shall assuredly become Shurashena ! "[1]

At these words the high-souled Celestials returned to their abode ; the valiant Shatrughna, however, summoned his army that was encamped on the banks of the Yamuna and the troops immediately came to that place, having learned of his victory, and he established himself there in the month of Shravana.

The inhabitants of that region of celestial aspect lived there for twelve years in peace and happiness, and the fields abounded in grain. Under the aegis of Shatrughna's arms, Indra sent rain in the proper season and the city was full of healthy and happy people. That capital had the brilliance of the crescent moon and rose in splendour on the banks of the Yamuna ; and it was magnificent with its buildings and squares, markets and highways and the inhabitants who belonged to the four castes.

Shatrughna had embellished the magnificent and vast edifices that Lavana had formerly constructed and painted in various colours. Parks and places of entertainment were to be found in all parts of that city, which was also adorned with works of art both human and divine. Of a celestial aspect, it was filled with different kinds of merchandise, and traders from every country came there. Looking on that opulent city, Shatrughna, the younger brother of Bharata, at the height of prosperity and happiness, experienced supreme satisfaction.

After twelve years while he yet dwelt in that enchanting abode, the thought came to him, " I desire to behold Rama again," thereupon, while residing in that city full of people of every condition, the prince resolved to look on the feet of the Chief of the Raghus once more.

[1] Shurashena—' Worthy of Heroes '.

CHAPTER 71

Shatrughna seeks out the Sage Valmiki

Now in the twelfth year, Shatrughna, with a small escort of servants and soldiers, desired to return to Ayodhya where Rama reigned. Having dissuaded his leading counsellors and chief warriors from accompanying him, he set out on his most excellent steed with a hundred chariots.

That descendant of Raghu, having covered fifteen stages (of the journey) reached Valmiki's hermitage where he halted. Thereafter that foremost of men paid obeisance to the ascetic, who, as host, with his own hands offered him water to wash his feet and the Arghya. Then the Sage recounted the most agreeable and varied traditions to the magnanimous Shatrughna and, speaking of the death of Lavana, he said :—

" Thou hast accomplished a difficult feat in slaying him ! O Valiant Youth, many mighty monarchs with their troops of infantry and cavalry succumbed in their struggle with Lavana. Thou hast slain him as it were in sport, O Foremost of Men! By thy valour, the fear of the worlds has been terminated. The death of Ravana was brought about with great difficulty by Rama, but this marvellous feat of arms has been accomplished by thee without any trouble whatsoever ! At the fall of Lavana, great joy broke out amongst the Celestials and happiness now reigns amidst all beings in the whole world, O Prince of the House of Raghu ! Being present in Vasava's assembly, I witnessed thy combat, and my heart too was filled with a keen felicity ; now by smelling the crown of thy head, I testify to the great affection I bear for thee."

With these words, the illustrious Valmiki smelt the crown of Shatrughna's head and offered him and his followers the traditional hospitality.

Having eaten, Shatrughna, the foremost of men, listened to the sweetest chants which told the history of Rama and how all had taken place. Stringed instruments accompanied the singing in the triple mode[1] which was expressive and melodic ; and he

[1] That is sung from the heart, throat and head.

heard the story of Rama and what had formerly been achieved by him; his imperishable exploits as they had taken place in time gone by, and that foremost of men, Shatrughna, was transported, his eyes full of tears, and he remained absorbed, sighing again and again. It seemed to him that this song made the past live once more, and Shatrughna's companions, overcome, listened to the enchanting symphonic poem with bowed heads.

Thereafter, those warriors cried out, "Wonderful!" and began to question each other, saying :—

"What is this? Where are we? Is it a vision or a dream? Are we seeing that marvellous epic in a dream?" In their extreme astonishment, they said to Shatrughna :—

"O Prince, do thou interrogate Valmiki, that foremost of Sages," for they were all struck with amazement, but Shatrughna answered them, saying :—

"O Ye Soldiers, it is not fitting to interrogate such a person. Many miracles take place in this hermitage, nevertheless, it does not become us to question a great ascetic out of curiosity."

Having spoken thus to his troops, the son of Raghu paid obeisance to that illustrious Rishi and entered his own quarters.

CHAPTER 72

Shatrughna returns to see Rama

THOUGH that lion among men had laid himself down, he was unable to sleep and his mind was absorbed in the marvellous epic of Rama, and while he listened to those ravishing strains accompanied by stringed instruments, the night passed quickly for the magnanimous Shatrughna. The night being over, that prince, having performed his morning devotions, with joined palms addressed the foremost of ascetics, saying :—

"O Blessed One, I desire to behold the one who is the Joy of the Raghu Race and crave permission to take leave of thee and the other acetics of rigid penances."

Hearing the petition of Shatrughna, the Scourge of his Foes, offspring of the Raghu Race, Valmiki embraced him and granted

him permission to depart. Thereupon that prince, having paid obeisance to the foremost of the ascetics, ascended a magnificent chariot and, in his eagerness to see Rama, soon reached Ayodhya.

Having entered that charming city, the long-armed and fortunate descendant of the Ikshvakus sought out Rama of great renown and beheld him seated amidst his counsellors, his countenance as radiant as the full moon, and he resembled the Thousand-eyed God surrounded by the Immortals.

Paying obeisance to the resplendent and magnanimous Rama with joined palms, he addressed that hero, whose prowess was truth, saying :—

" O Great King, all that thou hast commanded has been carried out by me ; the wicked Lavana is dead and his city is occupied. Now twelve years have been passed far from thee, O Joy of the Raghus, and I can no longer live separated from thee, O Prince. Be gracious to me, O Kakutstha, thou whose valour is immeasurable ; do not ask me to remain there longer like a calf separated from its mother."

As he spoke thus, Kakutstha embraced him and said :—

" Do not give way to despondency, O Valiant One, such conduct is not worthy of a warrior. Kings do not withdraw to foreign lands, O Raghava, the duty of a king is the protection of his people. O Virtuous Shatrughna, do thou visit me from time to time in Ayodhya, then thou must return to thy capital. I too cherish thee more than life itself yet it is essential to look to the security of thy kingdom. Meantime remain here with me for seven days, O Kakutstha, and thereafter return to Madhura with thine escort of servants and cavalry."

Hearing Rama's words that were pleasing to the heart and in conformity with dharma, Shatrughna answered sorrowfully, " So be it ! "

Thereafter, having passed a week in Rama's proximity, that skilful archer, Shatrughna, in accord with his brother's will, made preparations to depart. Paying obeisance to that true hero, the magnanimous Rama, and to Bharata and Lakshmana, he ascended his chariot and, being accompanied for a great distance by Lakshmana and Bharata, he hastened to regain his capital.

CHAPTER 73

The Death of a Brahmin's Son

HAVING said farewell to Shatrughna, the fortunate Rama found satisfaction in ruling his kingdom in equity.

Now some time after, an aged peasant, a brahmin, bearing his dead child in his arms came to the palace gate, weeping and crying out again and again :—

" What sin did I commit in a previous existence ? "

Overcome with paternal grief, he repeated unceasingly, " O My Son, My Son ! Ah ! Of what fault was I formerly guilty in another body that I should see mine only son meet with death ? This boy had not yet reached adolescence, his fourteenth year not having been completed ! To my misfortune, before his time, this dear child has been struck down by death ! In a few days, I and thy mother too will die of grief, O Dear Child ! I do not recollect ever to have uttered a lie ; I do not remember ever inflicting an injury on any animal or doing harm to any person ! For what misdeed has this child, born to me, gone to the abode of Vaivaswata this day, ere he had performed a son's duties to his sire ? Never before have I witnessed or heard of such a dreadful thing as, in Rama's reign, for people to die prematurely. Rama must have committed a serious fault since in his kingdom, children succumb. Assuredly the young who inhabit other countries need not fear death ! O King, give me back the life of my child, who has fallen under the sway of death ! With my wife, I shall yield up my life at the gate of the king as if I were without a protector ! Thereafter, having been guilty of Brahmanicide, O Rama, be happy ! Mayest thou live long with thy brothers ! O Mighty Monarch, under thy rule, after a period of prosperity in thine empire, misfortune has now overtaken us, placing us under death's dominion, O Rama ! From now on we shall not enjoy the least felicity since the empire of the magnanimous Ikshvakus no longer has a support. With Rama as its protector, the death of children is certain. People perish under the unrighteous rule of an impious monarch. The

evil conduct of a king brings about the premature death of his subjects. When, in the cities and country, crimes are committed and no supervision is exercised, then death is to be feared! Undoubtedly the king will be held to be at fault in city and country, hence the death of this child."

Such were the countless recriminations that the unfortunate father addressed to the king whilst he clasped his son to his breast.

CHAPTER 74

Narada's Discourse

THE piteous lamentations of that unfortunate brahmin reached the ears of the king and he, in the profound distress he experienced, called together his ministers, Vasishtha and Vamadeva, with his brothers and the elders of the city also.

Then eight brahmins were ushered into the king's presence by Vasishtha, who resembled a God, and they said:—

"May prosperity attend thee!"

Thereafter those foremost of the Twice-born, Markandeya, Maudgalya, Vamadeva, Kashyapa, Katyayana, Javali, Gautama and Narada took their seats, and those Rishis being assembled, Rama paid obeisance to them with joined palms. Then the ministers and citizens received a cordial welcome, as was fitting, and all those highly effulgent persons being seated near him, Raghava informed them of the reproaches of that Twice-born One.

Hearing the words of the prince, who was filled with distress, Narada himself made this memorable reply in the assembly of the Sages:—

"Learn, O King, what has caused the untimely death of this child! When thou art conversant therewith, do what thou considerest to be thy duty!

"O Prince, Joy of the Raghus, formerly in the Krita Yuga, the brahmins alone practised asceticism; he who was not a brahmin in no wise undertook it. At the close of that age, all was consumed and absorbed into Brahman. Thereafter the

brahmins were re-born enlightened and endowed with the gift of immortality. In that age, none died prematurely and all were wise.

"The Treta Yuga followed when the sons of Manu were born,[1] who practised austerities; these noble men were the rulers, and full of power and heroism. In that era, Brahmins and Kshatriyas were equal in power nor could any distinction be found amongst them; it was then that the four castes were established.

"When that Yuga, which had been free from nescience, was consumed in the Fire,[2] unrighteousness placed one foot on the earth and, on account of wrong-doing, glory waned and the span of life was diminished, O Best of Monarchs. Flesh that had been formerly eaten,[3] became impure food throughout the whole world and, in these conditions, men gave themselves up to good deeds, taking refuge in purity and justice to rid themselves of evil.

"In the Treta Yuga, brahmins and warriors practised asceticism and the rest were under the supreme obligation of obedience, proper to the Vaishya and Shudra classes; the Shudras' duty being to serve the other three.

"O Great King, in the Dwapara Yuga, untruth and evil increased, unrightousness having placed a second foot on the earth, and then the Vaishyas began to practice penance, so that dharma, in the form of asceticism, was performed by the three castes, but the Shudras were not permitted to undertake it during that time, O Foremost of Men.

"O Prince, a man of the lowest caste may not give himself up to penance in the Dwapara Yuga; it is only in the Kali Yuga that the practice of asceticism is permitted to the Shudra caste. During the Dwapara Yuga it is a great crime for one of Shudra birth to perform such practices.

"At this time, in thine empire, a rigid penance is being undertaken by a wretched Shudra, O Prince, and this is the cause of the death of that child.

"The practice of unrighteousness, be it in the city or the

[1] The Kshatriyas or Warrior Class.
[2] The Fire of Dissolution that destroys the worlds at the end of a Cycle.
[3] Men lived on flesh by hunting before agriculture was known.

country, brings about misfortune and the monarch who does not mete out an immediate punishment, goes to hell, of this there is no doubt.

"An act of mortification that is prescribed is well done and a sixth of the merit goes to the king who rules with justice. But how should he, who does not protect his people, enjoy the sixth portion? O Lion among Men, thou shouldst investigate the happenings in thy kingdom and put down evil wherever it is practised, so righteousness may flourish, man's life be prolonged and the child be revived."

CHAPTER 75

Rama makes a Tour of Inspection of his Kingdom

HEARING the nectar-like words of Narada, Rama was delighted and said to Lakshmana :—

" O Dear Friend, thou who art faithful to thy vows, go and console that leading brahmin and cause the body of the child to be placed in a jar of oil with precious unguents and fragrant salves so that it is covered and does not suffer decomposition. Act in such a way that the body of the child does not dissolve or decay."

Having issued this command to Lakshmana, who was endowed with auspicious marks, the highly illustrious Kakutstha thought of Pushpaka, and said " Come hither ! " Conscious of his intention, the golden chariot[1] appeared before him in the same hour and bowing, said to him :—

" Behold, I am here at thy service, O Long-armed Prince ! "

Listening to the gracious words of Pushpaka, Rama paid obeisance to the great Rishis and ascended the chariot. Armed with his bow, his two quivers and his glittering sword, Raghava left the city in the charge of his two brothers, Saumitri and Bharata, and thereafter that monarch directed his course to the western region which he explored on every side ; then he went to the northern region bounded by the Himalayas, but found no

[1] The golden chariot that is the presiding Deity of Pushpaka.

trace of evil-doing there; later the eastern region was carefully searched by him and that long-armed Prince, from on high in his chariot, beheld people of pure morals there, as stainless as a mirror. Then he, who causes felicity to the great Rishis, ranged the southern region and, on the side of the Shaivala Mountain, a vast lake appeared to him, on the banks of which the blessed Raghava beheld an ascetic practising an extremely rigorous penance, his head hanging downwards.

On this that Prince born of Raghu approached the one who had given himself up to rigorous practices and said :—

" Blessed art thou, O Ascetic, who art faithful to thy vows! From what caste art thou sprung, O Thou who hast grown old in mortification and who art established in heroism. I am interested in this matter, I, Rama, the son of Dasaratha. What purpose hast thou in view? Is it heaven or some other object? What boon dost thou seek by means of this hard penance? I wish to know what thou desirest in performing these austerities, O Ascetic. May prosperity attend thee! Art thou a brahmin? Art thou an invincible Kshatriya? Art thou a Vaishya, one of the third caste or art thou a Shudra? Answer me truthfully!"

Then the ascetic, who was hanging head downwards, thus questioned by Rama, revealed his origin to that Prince born of Dasaratha, the foremost of kings, and the reason why he was practising penance.

CHAPTER 76

Shambuka is slain by Rama

HEARING the words of Rama of imperishable exploits, that ascetic, his head still hanging downwards, answered :—

" O Rama, I was born of a Shudra alliance and I am performing this rigorous penance in order to acquire the status of a God in this body. I am not telling a lie, O Rama, I wish to attain the Celestial Region. Know that I am a Shudra and my name is Shambuka."

As he was yet speaking, Raghava, drawing his brilliant and stainless sword from its scabbard, cut off his head. The Shudra

being slain, all the Gods and their leaders with Agni's followers, cried out, " Well done ! Well done!" overwhelming Rama with praise, and a rain of celestial flowers of divine fragrance fell on all sides, scattered by Vayu. In their supreme satisfaction, the Gods said to that hero, Rama :—

" Thou hast protected the interests of the Gods, O Highly Intelligent Prince, now ask a boon, O Beloved Offspring of Raghu, Destroyer of Thy Foes. By thy grace, this Shudra will not be able to attain heaven ! "

Hearing the words of the Gods, that hero of the region of truth, with joined palms, addressed Purandara of a Thousand Eyes, saying :—

" Since the Gods are gratified with me, let the son of that brahmin be resuscitated ! Accord me this, the greatest of all favours ! It is on account of my negligence that this child, the only son of that brahmin, has died before his time. Give him back his life ! May prosperity be yours ! I have promised that I would restore his son to this Twice-born, do not let my words prove false ! "

Thus spoke Raghava and the foremost of the Celestials, full of joy, gave him this reply, enhancing his felicity :—

" O Kakutstha be happy ! This very day that child has received new life and has been restored to his parents. The child was resuscitated at the instant that the head of the Shudra fell. Be happy ! May prosperity attend thee ! Now let us go, O Raghava, O Foremost of Monarchs, we desire to visit Agastya's hermitage. The hour of consecration is at hand for that great Rishi ! O Illustrious Prince, for twelve years, he has lived in the water. O Kakutstha, let us go together to offer felicitations to that ascetic. Do thou come and visit the foremost of Rishis also and be happy."

" Be it so ! " said the enhancer of the Raghus' joy and ascended the gold-encrusted Chariot, Pushpaka. Meantime, the Gods had left in their vast chariots and Rama followed them without delay to the hermitage of Kumbhayoni.

Beholding those Gods come to meet him, the virtuous Agastya, that treasury of asceticism, paid obeisance to all without distinction and, having received his homage and offered salutations to him, the Gods joyfully returned to their abode with

their attendants. When they had departed, Rama descended from the Pushpaka Plane and offered obeisance to that illustrious Rishi.

Agastya, radiant in his own effulgence, returned the salutation of his magnanimous Sovereign, who, having received supreme hospitality, seated himself, whereupon the illustrious Kumbhayoni of rigid penances said to him :—

" O Foremost of Men, be thou welcome ! O Raghava, it is my good fortune that brings thee here ! O Rama, thou art worthy of the highest respect on account of thine outstanding and innumerable attributes, O Prince ! Thou art a guest worthy of honour and abidest in mine heart. The Gods tell me that thou hast come here after slaying the Shudra and, by this act of justice thou hast restored the son of a brahmin to life ! Pass the night here with me, O Raghava, for thou art Narayana, the Blessed Lord and all is to be found in Thee ! Thou art the divine Purusha ! To-morrow at dawn thou canst return to the city in the Pushpaka Chariot.

" O My Friend, here is an ornament wrought by Vishvakarma, which is of divine origin and glows by its own light. Be pleased to accept it, O Kakutstha. To give again what one has received is said to be of the greatest profit. Thou art worthy of this ornament and also of the highest rewards since thou hast protected the Gods and their leaders. I have therefore a right to offer this to thee, do thou accept it, O Prince."

NOTE :

THE FOLLOWING FOURTEEN VERSES ARE CONSIDERED TO BE INTERPOLATIONS.

Then that great warrior of the Ikshvakus, pondering on the duties of the Kshatriyas, answered that magnanimous ascetic, saying :—

" O Illustrious Rishi, only brahmins may accept gifts, it is censurable for a Kshatriya to do so. It is not fitting for a Kshatriya to accept a gift from a brahmin. Do thou tell me therefore how I may do so ? "

On this, the Rishi Agastya replied, saying :—

" O Rama, O Son of Dasaratha, at the beginning of the Golden Age, the human race had no king, only the Celestials had Vasava

as their ruler. To obtain a king, therefore, men approached Brahma, the God of Gods and said :—

" ' O Lord, thou hast made Indra ruler over the Celestials, therefore do thou confer a sovereign upon us who shall be the foremost of men ; we cannot live without a king, this is our firm conviction ! '

" Then the Grandsire of the World sent for Indra and the other Gods and said :—

" ' Do ye all sacrifice a portion of your welfare ! ' and the Celestials surrendered part of their power and a king was born, whereupon Brahma named him Kshupa.[1] In his person, Brahma placed an equal proportion of the powers of the Gods and appointed him as ruler of men. By virtue of the portion of Indra's energy, the King Kshupa brought the earth under his control ; by the portion of Varuna's energy, he fostered health in his body ; by the power of Yama, he ruled the people. O Rama, by virtue of Indra's portion, thou art the Ruler of the earth, do thou accept this jewel and confer thy grace on me."

Hearing the words of the Sage, Rama accepted the brilliant and celestial gem sparkling like the rays of the sun and, having taken that excellent ornament, Dasarathi enquired of the great Sage Kumbhayoni, saying :—

" Whence hast thou obtained this divine ornament of celestial workmanship ? Who has given it to thee , O Brahmin, I ask thee out of curiosity , Thou art an ocean of marvels ! "

Then Agastya answered :—

" Hear, O Rama, how I obtained this ornament in the Treta-Yuga."

CHAPTER 77

The Story of Swargin

" O RAMA, formerly in the Treta-Yuga, there was a vast wilderness some four hundred miles in extent where there was neither beast nor bird and there I was undergoing a rigid penance. O My Friend, I began to range that uninhabited solitude ! I cannot describe its beauty with the fruits, roots of exquisite savour and the trees of varying essences.

[1] Kshupa—A shrub or small tree with roots.

" In the centre was a lake some four miles in extent, abounding in swans and waterfowl, Chakravakra birds being its ornament. It was covered with lotuses and waterlilies, no weed or moss grew there and its waters were deep, tranquil and sweet. Near that wonderful lake, I found a spacious hermitage which was of great antiquity and devoid of man or beast. It was there I spent a summer night, O Foremost of Men. At dawn, I rose to perform my morning devotions and directed my steps to the lake. There I beheld a dead body, plump and spotless, shining in splendour in the water. This sight caused me to reflect awhile, O Raghava, and I stood on the banks of the lake asking myself, ' What can this be ? '

" O Lord, a moment later a wonderful celestial chariot came into view, which was magnificent, and harnessed to swans that were as swift as thought. In that chariot I beheld a man of extraordinary beauty, O Joy of the House of Raghu, who was surrounded by thousands of Apsaras adorned with celestial ornaments. Some were singing enchantingly whilst others played on musical instruments such as Mridangas, Vinas and Panavas ; some were dancing and some, with the aid of Chanwaras gleaming like the moon's rays, possessing ornate handles, were fanning the face of that lotus-eyed youth. Then he, who was as radiant as the peak of Mount Meru, leaving his seat, descended from the chariot and, under my gaze, devoured that corpse. Having satisfied his hunger with abundant flesh, he plunged into the waters and after washing his hands and rinsing his mouth according to tradition, he re-ascended his chariot.

" Beholding that heavenly being about to depart, I spoke to him thus, O Prince :—

" ' Who art thou who resemblest a God ? Why hast thou partaken of this forbidden flesh, O My Friend ? Tell me how does this loathsome nourishment benefit thee, O Thou who art the equal of the Celestials ? There is some mystery in this, O Friend, I wish to know what it is ; I cannot believe a corpse to be fitting food for thee.'

" Thus, out of curiosity, in friendly accents, did I speak to that Nakin,[1] O Prince and having listened to me, he told me all."

[1] Nakin—One dwelling in ' Naka ', the sky, a divine Being.

CHAPTER 78

Shveta tells his Story

"HAVING listened to these auspicious words, that Celestial Being, with joined palms answered me in this wise, O Rama, Joy of the House of Raghu.

" ' Hear, O Brahmin, of what happened to me formerly, bringing about my felicity and also my suffering. Learn of the inexorable fate about which thou hast questioned me.

" ' In times gone by, my illustrious Sire, the mighty Sudeva reigned over the Vidarbhas. He had two sons by his two queens, O Brahmin, I was named Shveta and my younger brother Suratha. My father having ascended to heaven, I was installed as king by the people, and accordingly applied myself to rule with equity.

" 'A thousand years passed whilst I governed the empire piously and protected my people according to dharma. Knowing by certain indications that I was ageing, O Foremost of the Twice-born, I reflected on the laws of time and went to the forest. There I penetrated into an inaccessible grove, where there were neither beasts nor birds, in order to practise penance on the banks of this beautiful lake, having first placed my brother Suratha on the throne as lord of the empire.

" ' Near this lake, I gave myself up to severe mortifications and practised austerities for thousands of years in the great forest. This excessively rigid penance caused me to attain Brahmaloka, which nothing transcends. Having ascended to heaven, extreme hunger and thirst assailed me, O Foremost of the Twice-born, whereupon, my mind troubled, I approached the Lord of the Three Worlds, the Grandsire, and said to him :—

" ' " O Blessed One, in Brahmaloka one should not be subject to hunger and thirst ; from what act of mine does this desire to eat and drink, spring ? What should be my food, tell me, O Divine Grandsire ? "

" ' Then the Grandsire answered me, saying :—

" ' " O Son of Sudeva, thine own flesh shall be thy savoury nourishment and thou shalt feed on it daily. Thou didst ever nourish thy body well when thou wast performing an excellent

penance. That which is sowed ever flourishes, O Virtuous Shveta. Without making any gifts, thou didst practise asceticism ; it is on this account that thou art subject to hunger and thirst in heaven, which thou hast attained. Therefore, thine own body that has been well nourished shall be thy food in heaven, and it shall be converted into Amrita, but when the great and invincible Rishi Agastya comes to the forest, he will deliver thee from this bondage, O Shveta ! My Friend, he can save the hosts of the Gods themselves, how much more is he able to save thee from the domination of hunger and thirst to which thou art subjected, O Long-armed Hero."

" ' O Lord of the Twice-born, since the decree of Bhagawat, that Lord of Lords, I have been nourishing myself miserably on mine own body ! For innumerable years I have fed upon it without it diminishing, O Brahmarishi, and my appetite is excessive. Do thou deliver me from this painful pass ; release will not come to me from any other than the Ascetic Kumbhayoni ! O Dear and Excellent Sage, do thou accept this gift, may good betide thee, accord me this favour ! I will bestow gold, possessions, raiment, savoury food and much else besides, as also ornaments on thee, O Foremost of Sages, I offer thee all that is desirable and all felicity, as the price of my deliverance, O Grant me that grace ! '

" Hearing these words of that unfortunate Celestial Being, I accepted the rare jewel in order to save him and, as soon as I received that magnificent gem, the mortal body of that Royal-Rishi melted away. His body being thus dissolved, that Rajarishi experienced supreme satisfaction and joyfully ascended to Swarga. This is why that Celestial Being, who resembled Shakra, gave that divine gem, wonderful to look upon, to me, O Kakutstha."

CHAPTER 79

The hundred Sons of Ikshvaku

HAVING heard Agastya's marvellous story, Raghava, full of reverence and admiration, began to question him, saying :—

" O Blessed One, why are there no wild beasts or birds in this

forest where the King of Vidarbha, Shveta, used to practise that rigid penance? Why did that prince enter this deserted and uninhabited wood in order to give himself up to the performance of asceticism; I wish to know all in detail?"

Hearing this question inspired by curiosity, that foremost of ascetics began to speak thus:—

"In ancient times in the golden age, O Rama, the Lord Manu was the ruler of the earth. His son was Ikshvaku, the enhancer of the felicity of his race. Having placed his eldest son, the invincible Ikshvaku on the throne, Manu said:—

"'Become the founder of royal dynasties in the world!'

"O Rama, Ikshvaku promised to follow his injunctions and Manu, greatly delighted, added:—

"'I am pleased with thee, O Noble One, undoubtedly thou shalt found a dynasty but, whilst ruling thy subjects with firmness, never punish any who is without fault! A punishment meted out to the guilty according to the law is instrumental in conducting a monarch to heaven, therefore, O Long-armed Hero, O Dear Child, exercise extreme care in wielding the sceptre, this is thy supreme duty on earth.'

"Having counselled his son repeatedly in this wise, Manu joyfully repaired to the eternal abode of Brahma.

"His Sire having ascended to the Celestial Region, Ikshvaku of immeasurable glory reflected anxiously within himself as to how he should create progeny. Having performed many sacrifices and charitable deeds, he was blessed with a hundred sons like unto the offspring of the Gods. The youngest of all, O Descendant of Raghu, was stupid and ignorant nor would he listen to the advice of his elders. On account of his lack of virtue, the king named him Danda, thinking that the rod (Danda) would inevitably fall on him.

"As the monarch was unable to find a province suitable for his son, O Raghava, Conqueror of Thy Foes, he carved out a territory for him between the Vindhya and Shaivala Mountains. Danda became king and there built an incomparably beautiful city on that charming site surrounded by mountains. He named that city Madhumanta, O Lord, and chose Shukra Deva of pious practices as his spiritual preceptor. Danda with his Guru ruled over that city inhabited by happy people as the King of the Gods

in heaven. That monarch, the son of the foremost of men, with the help of Shukra Deva ruled as the great and magnanimous Shakra in heaven under the guidance of Brihaspati."

CHAPTER 80

Danda insults Aruja

HAVING related that story to Rama, the great ascetic, born from a jar, continued :—

" Danda, O Kakutstha, fully self-controlled, continued to rule for innumerable years, overcoming all obstacles. One day, in the delicious month of Chaitra, the king went to the ravishing hermitage of Bhargava and he beheld the daughter of that ascetic, who was walking in the woodland glade, and she was unrivalled in beauty on earth so that he was seized with desire. Pierced by the darts of the God of Love, he approached that youthful maiden and enquired of her, saying :—

" ' From whence art thou, O Lady of graceful hips ? Who is thy father, O Beautiful One ? Being afflicted with passion, I make these enquiries of thee, O Fair Lady ? '

" Thus did he speak in his agitation and the daughter of the ascetic answered sweetly :—

" ' I am the eldest daughter of Shukracharya of imperishable deeds, know that my name is Aruja, O Foremost of Kings, and I dwell in this hermitage. Do not force thine attentions upon me, O King, for I am a girl still under my father's authority. My Sire is thy Guru, O Great Prince, thou art the disciple of that magnanimous ascetic ; that great Sage will inflict a terrible punishment on thee in his wrath. It is for thee to act honestly regarding me, in accord with the law of dharma, O Prince. Do thou first approach my father and ask for my hand or fearful consequences will follow thine act. In his wrath, my father will consume the Three Worlds themselves, O Thou of faultless form ; if, however, thou ask for my hand, he will bestow it on thee.'

" Thus spoke Aruja, but Danda, who had fallen under the sway of desire, with joined palms, answered her in his frenzy, saying :—

" 'Grant me thy favours, O Charming One, do not delay, on thine account my breath is being extinguished, O Thou of lovely countenance. Having united myself with thee, what care I if death or the most terrible retribution follow? Respond to my love, O Timid One, that love that overwhelms me.'

" Speaking thus, he seized that youthful woman roughly in his powerful arms and sated his lust on her. Having committed this monstrous outrage, Danda returned to the unrivalled city of Madhumanta with all speed. Aruja however, sobbing near the hermitage, terrified, awaited her father who resembled a God."

CHAPTER 81

The Destruction of Danda's Kingdom

" HAVING heard what had taken place, the blessed and illustrious Rishi, surrounded by his disciples, returned to the hermitage, tormented with hunger. Like unto the moon that has been devoured by the planet Rahu at dawn and is deprived of its radiance, he beheld the unfortunate Aruja besmeared with dust; and that brahmin, being already consumed with hunger, fell into a transport of rage, so that it seemed he wished to destroy the Three Worlds. Thereafter he addressed his disciples, saying :—

" 'Witness the terrible calamity born of my wrath, like unto fire, that will befall that evil-doer, Danda! The time has come for the destruction of that wretched monarch and his court, he, who has dared to place his hand in the flame of the sacrificial fire, will soon reap the fruit of his evil act! In seven nights, he will perish with his children, infantry and cavalry. Pakashana[1] will destroy the territory of that wretch with a rain of dust for a distance of a hundred leagues in extent. In the kingdom of Danda, in seven days, all things animate and inanimate will perish utterly and everything that grows will vanish entirely under the rain of ashes!'

" Having spoken thus to the inhabitants of the hermitage, his eyes red with anger, he added :—

[1] Pakashana—' Punisher of the Demon Paka ', a title of Indra.

" ' Take up your abode beyond the confines of this region ! '

" Hearing the words of Shukracharya, all those who dwelt in the hermitage, left that place to establish themselves elsewhere, and Shukracharya, having spoken thus to that company of Sages, addressed his daughter Aruja and said :—

" ' Remain in this hermitage, O Foolish One, and give thyself up to meditation. O Aruja, awaiting the time of thy deliverance, enjoy carefree this lake of enchanting aspect four miles in extent ! Those creatures that take refuge with thee at that time will in no wise suffer from the rain of dust ! '

"At the command of the Brahmarishi, her Sire, Aruja, who was overcome with grief, answered ; ' So be it ! '

" Having spoken thus, Shukracharya found a dwelling elsewhere.

" Meantime the kingdom of that foremost of men with his servants, his army and his chariots was reduced to ashes on the seventh day, as predicted by that interpreter of the Veda. O Prince, that empire situated between the Vindhya and the Shaivala Mountains, its sovereign having ceased to uphold dharma, thus cursed by the Brahmarishi, has since been known as the Desert of Dandaka, O Kakutstha, and the place where the ascetics dwelt became known as Janasthana. I have now replied fully to all that thou hast asked, O Raghava. The hour for the evening devotions is passing, O Hero; from all directions, the great Rishis with their loshtas filled, having bathed, O Prince, are now worshipping the Sun-god. The sun has withdrawn behind the Astachala Mountains while these learned interpreters of the Veda were reading the Brahmanas together ; do thou also perform thine ablutions, O Rama."

CHAPTER 82

Rama takes leave of Agastya

FOLLOWING the behest of the Rishi, Rama, in order to perform his evening devotions, approached the sacred lake frequented by troops of Apsaras. Having completed his ablutions and the

evening rites, he returned to the hermitage of the magnanimous Kumbhayoni. Thereupon Agastya, for his repast, prepared many kinds of fruits and roots with rice and pure ingredients, and the foremost of men partook of that food resembling Amrita and passed the night there happily.

At dawn, that Subduer of His Foes, the Prince of the Raghus, having performed the morning rituals, approached the Sage before his departure and, paying obeisance to that great ascetic, born from a jar, said to him :—

" Suffer me to return to this retreat, I beg of thee ! Happy am I to have received the favour of looking on such a great ascetic whom I shall visit again for my sanctification ! "

Listening to the words of Kakutstha, wonderful to hear, he, whose vision was righteousness, in great delight, answered :—

" O Rama, O Joy of the Raghus, thy speech, brilliantly expressed, is of great eloquence. Thou thyself art the sanctity of all beings ! O Rama, whoever casts a single glance of love on thee is purified ; he goes to paradise where he receives the homage of the Lords of the Third Heaven ; but those who look on thee with a malevolent eye are suddenly struck down by the Rod of Death and fall into hell ! O Prince, Issue of the Raghu Race, thou art the salvation of all beings on earth and those who even speak of thee acquire perfection. Do thou go in peace ! Govern thine empire with equity ; thou art the path of the world ! "

Thus did that Muni speak and the virtuous prince with joined palms, paid obeisance to that ascetic and, having offered salutations to that foremost of Sages and the other Munis, tranquilly ascended the golden Pushpaka Chariot. As he was leaving, the companies of Sages showered blessings of every kind upon him, he who was equal to Mahendra, as the Devas acclaim that God of a Thousand Eyes.

Standing in space, Rama, in his golden Chariot Pushpaka, resembled the moon encircled with clouds. Thereafter, at noon, Kakutstha entered Ayodhya amidst continuous acclamations and, having reached the central court, he dismounted from the car. When the prince left Pushpaka, that magnificent chariot, which coursed wheresoever one willed, dismissing it, he said :—
" Go, may good betide thee ! "

Thereafter Rama issued this command to the doorkeeper who was in the courtyard and said :—

" Go and announce mine arrival to Lakshmana and Bharata, those two swift-footed heroes, and summon them here without delay."

CHAPTER 83

Bharata persuades Rama not to perform the Rajasuya Sacrifice

AT this command from Rama of imperishable exploits, the guard summoned those two youthful princes and came back to inform his master. Then he, seeing Bharata and Lakshmana, embraced them both and said to them :—

" I have faithfully carried out the task of the excellent Twice-born, now I wish to perform the Rajasuya Sacrifice, which to my mind is indestructible and unchangeable, the support of the law and the destroyer of all evil. Accompanied by you both, who are parts of myself, I wish to prepare for this sacrifice based on eternal dharma, for it is an unwritten duty. It was after performing the Rajasuya Sacrifice that Mitra, the Scourge of His Foes, obtained Varuna-hood by means of this rich offering. Having celebrated that sacrifice according to the tradition which was well-known to him, Soma acquired an imperishable state and renown in the world. Do you therefore tell me what is now best, and considering the matter with me, say candidly what is of the greatest profit for the future."

Thus spoke Raghava, and Bharata, a skilful debator, with joined palms made answer, saying :—

" O Dear Brother, in thee the highest sense of duty is to be found ! It is in thee that the world finds her support ; in thee, all glory resides, and also immeasurable valour, O Long-armed Hero. All the kings of the earth, and we too, regard thee as the protector of the universe, as do the Gods and Prajapati. Children look on thee as their father, O Valiant Prince, thou hast become the salvation of living beings also, O Raghava ; how shouldst thou perform a sacrifice of such a nature, O Lord, in which the destruction of many royal Houses is involved ? Further O King,

it means the total annihilation of those warriors who have become the heroes of the earth, which will prove a cause of universal condemnation. O Lion among Warriors, O Thou whose virtues render thee unequalled in power, do not destroy the world that is wholly subject to thee."

When Rama heard Bharata speak thus, in words sweet as nectar, he experienced an extreme delight and addressed this benign response to the enhancer of Kaikeyi's joy, saying :—

" I am happy and delighted with what thou hast said, O Irreproachable Hero, this resolute discourse, in accord with righteousness, that thou hast uttered, O Lion among Heroes, has preserved the earth ! The resolve I made to proceed with the great Rajasuya Sacrifice, I now renounce on thine excellent counsel, O Virtuous Bharata. The wise should never commit any act detrimental to the world. Contrariwise one should be willing to receive good advice even from a child, O Thou, the elder brother of Lakshmana ; I am pleased with thy counsel which is wise and considered, O Valiant Prince ! "

CHAPTER 84

The Story of Vritra

THUS spoke Rama to the great-souled Bharata, and thereafter Lakshmana addressed this eloquent discourse to the One who enhanced the felicity of the Raghus, saying :—

" The great Sacrifice Ashwamedha removes all sins and is the infallible means of purification ; may it please thee to undertake it, O Joy of the Raghus !

" It is said in the Puranas that the magnanimous Vasava, sullied by the sin of brahmanicide, was cleansed by performing the Horse-sacrifice. O Long-armed Warrior, in former times when Devas and Asuras were united, there lived a universally honoured Daitya named Vritra. The width of his body was an hundred leagues and he was three times as tall. In his loving-kindness, he cast his beneficent glance in all directions on the Three Worlds. Loyal, grateful, highly intelligent, he ruled his fertile territory with care and integrity and, under his dominion,

the earth produced all that could be desired—flowers, roots and delicious fruits. Without being cultivated the earth was abundantly fruitful and for many years that magnanimous prince enjoyed a rich empire marvellous to behold. Then the thought came to him: 'I shall perform a rigid penance; in truth, asceticism is a great joy, all other happiness is a mere illusion.'

"Having established his eldest son over his people as King of Madhura, he gave himself up to a rigid penance that caused terror among the Gods. As Vritra was mortifying himself thus, Vasava, in his extreme affliction, sought out Vishnu and spoke to him as follows :—

"'On account of his asceticism that long-armed hero, Vritra, has conquered the worlds; he is powerful and virtuous; I shall not be able to overcome him. If he continues with these austerities, O Chief of the Gods, we shall be subject to him as long as the worlds endure. Thou hast overlooked the extremely illustrious Vritra or he would not live an instant in the face of thy wrath, O Lord of the Gods. From the moment he succeeded in propitiating thee, O Vishnu, he has taken over the direction of the worlds. It is for thee in thy great solicitude to befriend the universe, then by thy favour, the worlds will live in peace, free from affliction. All the inhabitants of the celestial region have fixed their gaze on thee, O Vishnu. Slay Vritra and by this great feat deliver them! Thou hast ever lent support to the magnanimous Gods which cannot be withstood by their adversaries; be the refuge of those who have no other refuge!'"

CHAPTER 85

The Death of Vritra

HEARING Lakshmana speak thus, Rama, the Slayer of His Foes, said to him :—"O Thou faithful to thy duty, do thou relate the rest of the history of Vritra's destruction!"

At these words of Raghava's, the virtuous Lakshmana, increaser of Sumitra's delight, continued his exalted theme, saying :—

"Such was the entreaty addressed by all the inhabitants of

heaven led by that Lord of a Thousand Eyes, to Vishnu, who answered all those Gods with Indra at their head, saying :—

" 'An ancient tie binds me to the magnanimous Vritra, therefore I am unable to favour you by slaying that great Asura ; it is not possible for me to grant you that supreme felicity but I will indicate the means whereby the Thousand-eyed God may destroy him. I shall divide my natural essence into three parts, O Foremost of the Gods, and by these means, that God of a Thousand Eyes can undoubtedly slay Vritra. A third of my being will enter Vasava, a second part into the thunderbolt and a third will enter the bosom of the earth, thus Vritra will perish ! '

" Thus spoke the Lord of the Gods, and the Deities answered him saying :—

" ' O Slayer of Daityas, assuredly what Thou hast uttered will come to pass ! May victory be Thine, we shall now take our leave infused by Thy power in order to slay the Asura Vritra, O Lord ! '

" Then all the magnanimous Gods with Sahasraksha at their head went to the great Asura Vritra's retreat. There they beheld the most powerful of Asuras, effulgent in his own radiance that seemed to consume the worlds and space itself. Beholding the foremost of the Asuras, the Gods were seized with terror and reflected, 'How shall we kill him?' 'How may we avoid defeat!'

"As they were thinking thus, Sahasraksha, the Destroyer of Cities, taking the thunderbolt in his hands, hurled it at Vritra, striking his head. Like unto the Fire of Time, formidable, blazing with its wreath of flame, that thunderbolt falling on Vritra's head caused terror to all the worlds.

" Then the extremely illustrious King of the Gods, reflecting on the iniquity he had perpetrated in slaying his enemy, fled in all haste to the ends of the world ; and the sin of brahmanicide pursued him in his flight and entered into him, so that Indra was subject to great affliction.

" The enemy destroyed, but deprived of their leader, the Gods with Agni at their head, lavished homage on Vishnu, Lord of the Three Worlds, saying :—

" ' Thou art the way, O Supreme Master, the First-born, Father of the Universe ! For the protection of the world thou hast assumed the form of Vishnu. By thy favour, Vritra is

slain, but the sin of brahmanicide holds Vasava in bondage, do thou liberate him!'

"Then Vishnu answered the Gods who had spoken thus and said :—

"'Let Shakra, he who bears the thunderbolt, perform a sacrifice in mine honour and I will cleanse him of his sin. Let him who destroyed Paka, offer up the sacred Horse-sacrifice and he will become King of the Gods once more, without having anything to fear.'

"Having thus addressed the Gods in these words like unto Amrita, Vishnu, the Lord of the Celestials, while they were yet acclaiming him, returned to Trivishtapa."

CHAPTER 86

Indra is liberated by means of the Ashwamedha Sacrifice

HAVING thus described the slaying of Vritra at length, Lakshmana, the foremost of men, continued :—

"The extremely valiant Vritra, who inspired terror in the Gods, being destroyed, Shakra, his slayer, filled with the guilt of brahmanicide, failed to return to his senses and, having taken refuge at the end of the worlds, his mind confused, distracted, he remained there for some time, resembling a serpent that is casting its slough. And the Thousand-eyed God, having disappeared, the whole world was agitated and the earth seemed to be lost, bereft of its humidity, its forests dried up.[1] There were no running waters to feed the lakes and rivers and a great desolation seized all beings on account of the lack of rain.

"Then the Gods seeing the decay of the world, which filled them with distress, began to prepare for the sacrifice according to the words Vishnu had formerly uttered, and all the Hosts of the Gods accompanied by their spiritual preceptors and the Rishis sought out the terror-stricken Indra in his retreat.

"Beholding Sahasraksha assailed by the guilt of brahmanicide, O Foremost of Men, and having paid homage to the Chief of the Gods, they performed the Ashwamedha. O Foremost of

[1] He being the sender of rain.

Men, thereafter the great Horse-sacrifice took place, which was offered by the magnanimous Mahendra in order to cleanse himself of the sin of brahmanicide, and the ceremony being completed, the spirit of brahmanicide issued out of Indra's body and approaching the Gods enquired of them saying :—' Tell me, where shall be my abode ? ' and the Gods in delight, answered :— ' Divide thyself into four parts, O Evil One ! '

" Hearing the words of the mighty Gods, the spirit of brahmanicide did so, varying his habitation, he with whom cohabitation is a disaster, and said :—

" 'Restraining egoity and following mine own whim with a quarter of myself I shall inhabit the rivers in flood in the rainy season. With another quarter undoubtedly I shall dwell perpetually in the earth as Ushara.[1] I speak the truth ! For the third portion I shall live for three nights each month with radiantly youthful women, whose pride I shall humble ; with my fourth portion I shall live in those who by false report cause the death of innocent brahmins, O Mighty Deities.'

" Then the Gods answered, saying :—' O Thou, to live with whom is a calamity, do as thou sayest, accomplish thy design ! '

" Full of joy, the Gods then paid homage to Vasava of a Thousand Eyes, who was cleansed of his sin and delivered from his affliction. And Sahasraksha, having been installed on the throne, peace came to the whole world and Indra paid homage to that wonderful sacrifice.

" Such is the pre-eminence of the Ashwamedha Ceremony, O Joy of the Raghus ! Do thou perform the Horse-sacrifice ! " Hearing these exalting words of Lakshmana, whose charm touched his heart, that magnanimous sovereign, the equal of Indra in strength and prowess, experienced supreme satisfaction.

CHAPTER 87

The Story of Ila

HAVING listened to Lakshmana, the eloquent and powerful Raghava answered with a smile :—

" O Best of Men, Lakshmana, that which thou hast related

[1] Ushara—Salıne soil.

regarding the slaying of Vritra and the fruits of the Horse-sacrifice are wholly true, O Gentle One. It is said that formerly Kardama, the son of Prajapati, the extremely virtuous and blessed Ila, reigned over the province of Bahlika. That highly illustrious monarch, O Lion of Men, having made the entire earth subject to him, reigned over his subjects as his own sons.

"The magnanimous Gods, the wealthy Daityas, the Nagas, Rakshasas, Gandharvas and Yakshas, inspired by fear, constantly worshipped him, O Dear Friend, O Joy of the Raghus, and the Three Worlds trembled before that irascible potentate. Such was that prince, the illustrious Sovereign of the Bahlikas, full of energy, highly intelligent and fixed in his duty.

"During the lovely month of Chaitra, that long-armed warrior went hunting in the enchanting forest with his attendants, infantry and cavalry, and that magnanimous prince, in that wood, slew wild beasts in their hundreds and thousands, yet was not sated. Countless animals of all kinds had already perished when he reached the country where Karttikeya had been born. There the foremost of the Gods, the invincible Hara, was sporting with the daughter of the King of the Mountains, and, having transformed himself into a woman, the Lord of Uma, whose emblem is the bull, sought to entertain the Goddess in the midst of the waterfalls. Wherever there were male beings or trees in the forest, whatsoever there was, assumed a female form. King Ila, the son of Kardama penetrated into that place slaying innumerable beasts and he observed that they were all female, thereafter he became aware that he too was changed into a woman, as also his followers. His distress was great on this metamorphosis and he recognized it to be the work of Uma's consort and was seized with terror. Thereupon that monarch, with his attendants, his army and his chariots, took refuge with that mighty blue-throated God, Kapardin, and the magnanimous Maheshwara, laughing with that Goddess, the bestower of grace, said to the son of Prajapati:—

"'Rise, rise, O Royal Rishi, O Valiant son of Kardama, except manhood, ask what thou wilt!' The king was sorely disappointed by this reply of the magnanimous Shiva. Transformed into a woman, he did not wish to accept any other boon from the foremost of the Gods and, in his profound distress, that prince,

falling at the feet of the daughter of the King of the Mountains, Uma, with his whole heart entreated her, saying :—

" ' O Thou who distributest thy favours in all the worlds, O Lovely Goddess, whose sight is never fruitless, cast thy merciful glance upon me ! '

" Knowing what was passing in the heart of the Rajarishi, that Goddess, who stood before Hara, she, the consort of Rudra, made this reply :—

" ' Half the boon, that thou dost beg of us both, shall be granted by Mahadeva and the other half by me, therefore receive this half from man and woman according to thy desire ! '

" Hearing that remarkable and unparalleled boon bestowed by that Goddess, the king, overcome with joy, said :—

" ' If I have found favour with thee, O Goddess, whose beauty is unrivalled on earth, may I be a woman during one month and, in the second month, assume the form of a man ! '

" Then that Goddess of gracious mien, understanding his desire, answered amicably :—

" ' It shall be so, O King, and when thou art a man, thou shalt not remember thou wast ever a woman and, in the succeeding month, having become a woman, thou shalt forget thou wast ever a man ! '

" That is how that king, born of Kardama, being a man for one month became a woman the following month under the name of Ila, the most lovely female in the Three Worlds."

CHAPTER 88

Budha encounters Ila

THE story of Ila, related by Rama, greatly astonished Lakshmana and Bharata, and both, with joined palms, requested him to recount further details of that magnanimous King and his transformations, saying :—

" What did that wretched king do when he was transformed into a woman and how did he conduct himself when he became a man once more ? "

Hearing these words inspired by curiosity, Kakutstha told them what had happened to that monarch, saying :—

" Having been transformed into a woman, he passed the first month amidst his female attendants, his former courtiers, and that lady, the most beautiful on earth, whose eyes resembled lotus petals, entering a deep forest, wandering on foot amongst the copses, bushes and creepers, having given up all conveyances, sported in the winding vale. Now in that wooded region, not far from the mountain, lay a charming lake frequented by birds of every kind ; there Ila beheld Budha,[1] the son of the Moon, who was as radiant as that orb on rising.

" Budha, who remained inaccessible in the waters, had given himself up to a rigid penance, and that illustrious Sage was benevolent and extremely compassionate. In her astonishment, Ila agitated the waters with her companions, and beholding her, Budha fell under the sway of the God of Love with his shafts and, no longer self-controlled, became restless, as he stood in the lake. Seeing Ila, whose beauty was unsurpassed in the Three Worlds, he reflected :—' Who is this lady, more lovely than the Celestials ? I have never before beheld such radiance amongst the wives of Devas, Nagas, Asuras or Apsaras. If she is not already wedded to another, she is worthy of me ! '

"As he delayed, thinking thus, the company left the water and Budha, pondering, emerged therefrom. Thereafter those women having been summoned by him went to his retreat and they paid obeisance to him, whereupon that virtuous ascetic enquired of them, saying :—

" ' To whom does this lady, the most lovely in all the world, belong? Why has she come here? Tell me all without hesitation.'

" Hearing these fair words spoken in gentle tones, all those women answered with sweet voices, saying :—

" ' That lady is our mistress, she has no husband and wanders in the woods in our company.'

" Hearing the reply of those women, that Twice-born called to mind the science by which all may be perceived,[2] whereupon he became conversant with all that had passed regarding King Ila, and that foremost of Sages said to those women :—

[1] Budha—The planet Mercury.
[2] The sacred formula of Avartani.

"'Here on the mountainous region you shall dwell as Kimpurushis![1] Make your home on this mountain; you shall feed on roots, leaves and fruits and shall have Kimpurushas as your consorts!'

"At this command of the son of Soma, those women, who were men, having been transformed into Kimpurushis, took up their abode on the slopes of the mountain."

CHAPTER 89

The Birth of Pururavas

HEARING of the origin of the Kimpurushis, Lakshmana and Bharata both said to Rama, that Lord of Men, "How wonderful!"

Thereafter the illustrious and virtuous Rama continued the story of Ila, the son of Prajapati, saying :—

"When he saw that all those troops of Kinnaris had departed, the foremost of the Rishis said to the beautiful Ila with a smile :—

"'I am the beloved son of Soma, O Lady of gracious mien, do thou look on me with favour!'

"Thus did he speak in that lonely forest deserted by the others, and that gracious and beautiful solitary One answered him, saying :—

"'O Dear Son of Soma, I range where I will, I am at thy service, do whatsoever pleaseth thee!'

"Hearing this charming reply, the son of the moon was overjoyed and united himself with her in love. Thereafter the enamoured Budha passed the month of Madhu,[2] that vanished like a moment, in dalliance with Ila, and, the month having expired, that moon-faced one awoke from her couch and beheld the son of Soma given over to the practice of penance in the waters, supportless, his arms upstretched, and said to him :—

"'O Blessed One, I came to this inaccessible mountain with

[1] Kimpurushis—The females of the Kimpurushas, beings who are half human, sometimes identified with the Kinneras.

[2] Madhu—The month that is part of February and March.

my train of attendants, I do not see them anywhere, where have they gone ? '

" Hearing the words of the Rajarishi, who had lost all knowledge of the past, Budha, in order to re-assure him, said in friendly tones :—

" 'A great hailstorm overwhelmed thy attendants whilst thou wast asleep, having taken refuge in the hermitage in fear of the wind and rain. Be happy, banish all anxiety and calm thyself! O Hero, live here in peace, nourishing thyself on fruit and roots.'

" The King, comforted by these words, then made this noble reply, in the distress that the loss of his people caused him :—

" ' I cannot abandon my kingdom, though deprived of my servants ; I must not delay an instant, O Illustrious Ascetic, permit me to depart. I have an elder son fixed in his duty and extremely illustrious, O Brahmin, his name is Shashabindu ; he shall succeed me. Nay, I cannot abandon my consorts and my good servants, O Illustrious Ascetic, do not reproach me.'

" Thus spoke that Indra among monarchs and Budha, who first consoled him, then addressed these astonishing words to him, saying :—

" ' Be pleased to remain here ; do not grieve, O Mighty Kardameya ; at the end of the year I will grant thee a boon.'

" Hearing these words of Budha of imperishable deeds, who was conversant with the Veda, Ila resolved to remain there. The following month, becoming a woman, he spent in dalliance with Budha and, thereafter, becoming a man once more, he passed the time in the exercise of duty. In the ninth month the lovely Ila gave birth to a son, the mighty Pururavas and, after he was born, she gave the child into the paternal hands of Budha, whom he resembled."

CHAPTER 90

Ila regains her natural State through the Performance of the Ashwamedha Sacrifice

RAMA having related the story of the marvellous birth of Pururavas, the illustrious Lakshmana and Bharata enquired of him once more, saying :—

"After Ila had passed a year with the son of the Moon-god, what did she do? O Lord of the Earth, tell us all!"

Thus questioned by his two brothers in affectionate tones, Rama continued to relate the story of Ila, the son of Prajapati, and said:—

"That hero, having recovered his manhood, the extremely intelligent and illustrious Budha called together the Sages, the extremely noble Samvarta, Chyavana the son of Bhrigu, the Ascetic Arishtanemi, Pramodana, Modakara and the Hermit Durvasa. When they were all assembled, the eloquent Budha, able to discern the truth, said to those Sages, his friends, who were endowed with great power:—

"'Learn what has happened to that long-armed king, the son of Kardama, so that his happiness may be re-established!'

"While those Twice-born were conversing thus, Kardama came to that forest accompanied by Poulastya, Kratu, Vashatkara, and Omkara of great effulgence. All those ascetics, happy to find themselves together and wishing to be of service to the Lord of Bahli, each voiced their views about him; Kardama, however, expressed himself with extreme wisdom for the good of his son, and said:—

"'O Twice-born Ones, hear what I have to say for the happiness of the prince. I see no remedy apart from the God who has the bull as his emblem. There is no sacrifice greater than the Ashwamedha, which is dear to the heart of the mighty Rudra. Let us therefore perform this mighty sacrifice.'

"Thus spoke Kardama and all the foremost of Sages approved these means of propitiating Rudra.

"Thereafter a Rajarishi, the disciple of Samvarta, the Conqueror of Hostile Citadels, whose name was Marutta, performed that great sacrifice which took place near Budha's hermitage, whereupon the glorious Rudra was extremely gratified and, the ceremony being accomplished, the consort of Uma, in an excess of joy, addressed all those Sages, in Ila's presence, saying:—

"'I am pleased with your devotion in the Ashwamedha Sacrifice. O Illustrious Brahmins, what shall I do for this King of the Bahlis?' Thus did the Lord of the Gods speak, and the Sages, in deep recollection, caused the Lord of the Gods to

look upon them with favour so that Ila might regain his manhood. Then Mahadeva, gratified, gave him back his virility and having conferred that favour on Ila, the mighty God disappeared.

" The Horse-sacrifice being complete and Hara having rendered himself invisible, all those Twice-born, of penetrating gaze, returned whence they had come. The king, however, renouncing his capital, founded the city of Pratishthana in the central region, which was unsurpassed in splendour, whilst Shashabindu, that Rajarishi, Conqueror of Hostile Cities, dwelt in Bahli. From that time Pratishthana became the residence of King Ila, the valiant son of Prajapati, and, his time having come, he went to Brahma's abode.

" The son of Ila, the King Pururavas succeeded him in Pratishthana. Such is the merit of the Ashwamedha Sacrifice, O Bull among Men. Ila, who was formerly a woman, became a man again, which would have been impossible by any other means."

CHAPTER 91

Rama gives the command for the Ashwamedha Sacrifice to be performed

HAVING related this history to his two brothers, Kakutstha of immeasurable glory, addressed these pious words to Lakshmana, saying :—

"Assemble for counsel, Vasishtha, Vamadeva, Javali, Kashyapa and all the brahmins learned in the Ashwamedha Sacrifice. O Lakshmana, I shall loose the caparisoned steed in accord with tradition ! "

On this command being communicated to him, Lakshmana, of swift step, assembled all those Sages and ushered them into Rama's presence. When they beheld Rama, who resembled a God, paying obeisance to their feet, they showered blessings upon him. Having performed the Pranjali,[1] Raghava addressed those Sages on the Ashwamedha Sacrifice, in a speech inspired by dharma.

[1] Pranjali—A gesture of respect. See Glossary.

Hearing the words of Rama and having offered homage to the God, whose emblem is the Bull, all those Twice-born praised the Ashwamedha highly, and that eulogy greatly delighted Kakutstha, who seeing them ready to perform the ceremony, said to Lakshmana :—

" O Long-armed Hero, make known to the magnanimous Sugriva that he should come here with his great monkeys and the innumerable dwellers in the woods in order to enjoy this great festival and be happy. Let Bibishana, he who has no rival in valour, come surrounded by his host of Rakshasas, moving where they will, in order to assist me in the great Ashwamedha Sacrifice. Let wealthy monarchs, who wish to render me a service, come in all haste with their retinues to see the place of sacrifice and all the virtuous Twice-born, who have gone to foreign lands, summon them all to the Ashwamedha Sacrifice, O Lakshmana. Invite all the Rishis, those long-armed warriors, mines of asceticism, who live in distant parts with their wives, as also the players on the cymbals, jugglers and dancers.

" Let a vast structure be set up near the Gaumati River in the Naimisha Wood, O Long-armed Warrior, it is pre-eminently a sacred spot. Let propitiatory rites be performed everywhere and hundreds of brahmins, conversant with the law, assist in the Naimisha Wood at this great sacrifice, the highest of all and which is unsurpassed, O Joy of the Raghus. Assemble all the people speedily, O Virtuous Prince, and do not let them depart ill-contented, unsatisfied or without having been loaded with favours according to tradition. O Hero, send out in advance a hundred thousand loads of rice in good condition and an ayuta of sesamum seed and beans as well as chick-peas, lentils, quantities of salt, oil of good quality and innumerable perfumes.

" Let Bharata first carefully furnish a hundred kotis of gold and as much silver, and go before. In the centre, the merchants, all the jugglers, dancers, cooks and women should be ranged, let them be numerous and young in heart ; the troops, however, should go in advance with Bharata. Shopkeepers, children, the aged, the Twice-born in profound meditation, the masons, carpenters, agents and also the mothers and women of the Princes apartments with the golden statue of my consort for

consecration, as also skilled sacrificers, should be first assembled by the illustrious Bharata, who will precede them.

" O Prince, he will cause pavilions to be set up worthy of the mighty kings and their suites. Food, drink and raiment should be supplied for those brilliant escorts."

Thereafter Bharata went away followed by Shatrughna and the magnanimous monkeys who surrounded Sugriva, accompanied by the leading priests. Bibishana, at the head of the Rakshasas and women in great numbers, provided an escort for the Rishis of rigid penance.

CHAPTER 92

Description of the Ashwamedha Sacrifice

HAVING arranged everything in detail with dispatch, the elder brother of Bharata loosed the horse marked with black spots, adorned with his own insignia. Placing Lakshmana, assisted by the priests, in charge of the steed, he himself went to the Naimisha Wood with his army.

That long-armed prince, beholding the vast and beautiful sacrificial spot, was greatly delighted and exclaimed, "How wonderful ! " During his sojourn in the Naimisha Wood, the kings brought all their gifts to Rama and he, in his turn, provided for them abundantly with food, drink and provisions of every kind. Bharata and Shatrughna were in the service of the king ; the magnanimous monkeys, who accompanied Sugriva, attended on the priests with humility ; Bibishana with his innumerable titans became the most diligent servitors of those Rishis of rigid penance. Sumptuous pavilions set up for the powerful monarchs and their retinues were under the orders of that most valiant prince. Such were the excellent arrangements devised for the Ashwamedha Sacrifice.

Meantime Lakshmana carefully watched over the comings and goings of the horse. Thus did that magnanimous Lion among monarchs proceed with the utmost punctiliousness in this foremost of sacrifices, during which nothing was heard but ' Give lavishly of all that is sought,' and, in the Ashwamedha

Sacrifice, that liberal Prince furnished all that everyone required till they were fully satisfied. Sweet dishes of every kind, confections, till they were no longer in demand, were distributed by monkeys and titans, and no-one was seen in rags or afflicted or hungry, but, in that splendid royal feast, only those who were happy and satisfied could be observed. Amongst the venerable Sages present, the oldest could not remember a sacrifice where such prodigious liberality had taken place.

Those who desired gold received gold, those who preferred possessions received them, those who coveted jewels had jewels bestowed upon them; and one beheld silver, gold, gems and raiment being distributed continually in great quantities.

'Neither Shakra, nor Soma, nor Yama, nor Varuna have ever achieved anything of such magnitude' proclaimed the ascetics; and, on every side, monkeys and titans stood distributing raiment, silver and rice in profusion to those who sought them.

This sacrifice of that foremost of monarchs was carried out in accord with every tradition and, at the end of a whole year, it still had not come to a close, nor was the treasury exhausted.

CHAPTER 93

Valmiki commands Kusha and Lava to recite the Ramayana

As this most wonderful sacrifice was proceeding, the disciples of Valmiki, that blessed Sage, suddenly came there and, having witnessed the divine festival, admirable to behold, that company of Rishis constructed some comfortable huts a little way off. Innumerable bullock carts full of provisions, with excellent fruit and roots were heaped in Valmiki's charming grove, and thereafter that Sage said to his disciples, Kusha and Lava :—

"Go, and with great enthusiasm sing the Epic Ramayana, cheerfully and carefully, in the sacred enclosures of the Rishis, the dwellings of the brahmins, along the roads and highways and in the residence of princes, and especially it should be sung at the gate of Rama's pavilion, where the sacrifice is taking place and also before the priests.

"Here are savoury fruits of every kind that grow in the

mountainous regions, eat and then sing. You will not experience any fatigue, O Dear Ones, on account of these roots and succulent fruits that will preserve the purity of your voices. If Rama, the Lord of the Earth, indicates that you should be heard by the assembled Sages, act accordingly. Each time you will have twenty Sargas[1] to sing, which you have previously learnt from me. Above all, do not entertain the least desire for reward ! Of what use is gold to ascetics who live on fruit and roots ? If Kakutstha questions you, saying 'Who is your Master ?' answer the king in this wise, 'We are both the disciples of the great Sage Valmiki !' Sing without fear to the accompaniment of these stringed instruments of a tone unknown heretofore, that you have tuned sweetly. Sing the poem from the beginning without showing any lack of respect to the king, who is the Father of all beings according to the law.

"To-morrow therefore, at dawn, with a cheerful heart and taking care to sing with sweet voices, accompany yourselves on these stringed instruments of harmonized intervals."

Having repeatedly issued these instructions, that ascetic born of Pracetas,[2] of noble birth, the illustrious Sage Valmiki, became silent.

On receiving the commands of that Sage, the two sons of Maithili humbly answered "We will act in accord with thy behests !" and those Conquerors of Hostile Cities then took their leave.

Those youthful boys allowed the excellent counsels of the Rishi to enter their hearts, as the Ashwins receive the teachings of Bhargava and, eager to put them into practice, they whiled away that auspicious night.

CHAPTER 94

Kusha and Lava chant the Ramayana

WHEN the dawn appeared, those two youthful ascetics, having bathed and ignited the sacred fire, began to sing, as the Rishi had previously instructed them to do.

[1] Sargas—Chapters or divisions.
[2] Pracetas—A name of the God Varuna.

Kakutstha listened to that poem, composed by the aged Valmiki, unheard till then, set to music in multiple cadences, accompanied by stringed instruments, in measured rhythm, and, hearing those youthful musicians, Raghava was greatly mystified.

During an interval in the sacrifice, that foremost of monarchs called together the great Sages, Kings, Pundits, Naigamas,[1] aged Grammarians, venerable brahmins and those versed in music, the Twice-born, those learned in omens and the citizens specially instructed in aesthetics, those who had knowledge of metres, words and accents, those who knew the different rhythms and measures, those versed in astronomy, those skilled in the science of sacrifices and rituals and experienced liturgists, those versed in discerning cause and effect, philosophers, scholars, teachers of hymns and legends and the Veda, those conversant with the Vrittas and Sutras, and also singers and dancers.

Thereafter, having assembled them all, Rama ushered in the two singers to that vast and murmuring throng of listeners for his own great pleasure. The two youthful disciples of the Sage began that recitation that unrolled melodiously, like unto the singing of the Gandharvas, nor could the company be sated with listening to so beautiful a song. In their delight, ascetics and great potentates, seemed to consume those musicians with their gaze, whom they looked upon again and again, and the whole assembly having centred its attention upon them, each said to his neighbour :—' Both resemble Rama, like twin representations of the same planet. If they did not wear matted locks and bark robes, we should see no difference between the singers and Raghava ! '

As the people of town and country spoke thus, Kusha and Lava, having introduced the first part according to Narada's instructions, continued up to the twentieth Sarga[2] during the afternoon, then Raghava, having heard the twenty Sargas, said to his beloved brother, " Give these two musicians eighteen thousand gold pieces immediately with aught else that they may desire, O Kakutstha ! "[3] Thereupon Saumitri instantly offered

[1] Naigamas-Interpreters of the Veda.
[2] Chapter
[3] This title being used for Lakshmana also.

this to those youthful boys, one after the other, but the great-souled Kusha and Lava would not accept the gold that was presented to them, enquiring in astonishment, " What good is this ? Grain, fruit and roots suffice ascetics like ourselves, what should we do with gold or silver in the forest ? "

These words amazed all Rama's assistants extremely and, desiring to know the origin of the poem, that illustrious prince enquired of those two disciples of the ascetic, saying :—

" What is this poetical composition ? Where is the residence of the sublime author of this great epic ? Where is this bull among the ascetics ? "

On this enquiry from Raghava, the two disciples of the Sage answered, saying :—

" The blessed Valmiki, who is attending the sacrifice, is the author of the poem in which thine whole life is told. Twenty-four thousand verses and a hundred Upakhyanas[1] have been used by that ascetic, the son of Bhrigu.[2] Five hundred Sargas divided into six Kandas, together with the Uttarakanda, O King, are the work of that magnanimous Rishi, our Guru. Thy conduct, thy circumstances, thine entire life is unrolled with its vicissitudes. If thou desirest it, O King, thou mayest hear it from us in the intervals of the sacrifice, in thy moments of leisure.

Thereafter Rama, accompanied by the Sages and magnanimous monarchs, having heard that melodious chant, returned to the sacrificial pavilion.

That recitation accompanied by Talas and Layas,[3] divided into Sargas in harmonious notes and tones, in which the scansion was stressed by the stringed instruments, was heard by the King from the lips of Kusha and Lava.

CHAPTER 95

Rama sends for Sita

SURROUNDED by the ascetics, kings and monkeys, Rama listened during many days to the sublime and wonderful epic, and while

[1] Upakhyanas—Episodes or Tales.
[2] Really in the line of Bhrigu.
[3] Talas and Layas—Musical modes.

the two sons of Sita, Kusha and Lava, were singing, he recognized them. Having reflected deeply, he summoned messengers of virtuous conduct and in the assembly spoke to them of that princess, saying :—

" Go and repeat my words to that Blessed One and say :—

" ' If she be irreproachable in her conduct and without sin, then, should she so desire it and has the approval of the Rishi, let her prove her good faith ! ' Do you then return and inform me concerning this matter. To-morrow at dawn, let Maithili, the daughter of Janaka attest her purity on oath in my presence, before the assembly ! "

At this extremely significant command from Raghava, the messengers straightway went to seek out the foremost of the ascetics and, bowing to that Sage, who shone with infinite effulgence, they, with humility, communicated Rama's words to him.

Hearing them, the extremely illustrious ascetic, learning of Rama's wish, said " Be it so ! May prosperity attend you ! "

Thereafter those royal messengers returned with the Muni's answer and repeated it faithfully to Raghava and he, being informed of the decision of that magnanimous Sage, full of joy, addressed the Rishis and the assembled kings, saying :—

" O Blessed Ones, with your disciples, the kings and their attendants and whosoever may wish to do so, bear witness to the vow that Sita will make ! "

These words of the magnanimous Raghava were praised by all the leading Rishis and those mighty kings who addressed the monarch saying :—

" Such conduct is only possible in Thee and is found nowhere else in the world, O Prince ! "

Having resolved thus, Raghava, the Scourge of his Foes, said :—

" To-morrow this shall take place," whereupon he dismissed the assembly.

The trial by oath being fixed for the following day, the magnanimous and illustrious Rama gave leave to all the great Sages and Kings to depart.

CHAPTER 96

Valmiki leads Sita before Rama

When the night had passed, the great descendant of Raghu went to the place of sacrifice to which he had summoned all the Rishis : Vasishtha, Vamadeva, Javali, Kashyapa, Vishvamitra, Dirghatmas and Durvasa of rigid penances, also Poulastya and Shakti, Bhargava, Vamana, Markandeya, Dhirghayus and the highly renowned Maudgalya, Garga, Chyavana, the virtuous Shatananda, the far-famed Bharadwaja, the illustrious Agniputra, Narada, Parvata and Gautama of great glory, all these ascetics and others of austere observances, in great numbers.

Inspired by curiosity, they all assembled, as also the intrepid titans ; and the valiant monkeys and kings, intrigued, gathered there in like manner, with the warriors, merchants and thousands of the lower caste. Brahmins of rigid penances arrived from every region and all met together to be present at the taking of the oath by Sita ; and that immense multitude stood absolutely motionless, as if turned to stone.

Knowing that all were come, the foremost of Sages immediately approached with Sita following him, her head bowed, her palms joined, choked with sobs, her mind absorbed in Rama.

Beholding Sita walking behind Valmiki, like unto the holy Shruti following in Brahma's footsteps, there arose a great clamour with cries of " Halahala ! " from all those who were oppressed with profound sorrow on account of the unfortunate princess. And some cried " Hail, O Rama ! " and some " Hail, O Sita ! " while the rest acclaimed both. Thereafter, advancing amidst that multitude, the foremost of the ascetics, accompanied by Sita, addressed Raghava, saying :—

" I am Valmiki, and here, O Dasarathi, is Sita of virtuous ways and conduct, who, on account of calumny, was abandoned near mine hermitage, the censure of the people having inspired thee with fear, O Virtuous One ! Sita will prove her innocence ; it is for thee to issue the command. These two sons of Janaki, twin brothers, invincible heroes, are thy sons also ; I speak the

truth to thee! I am the tenth son of Pracetas, O Joy of the Raghus, I do not recollect ever having uttered a lie; truly these are thy two children. During countless years I have practised asceticism, may I never reap the fruits thereof if Maithili be guilty! I have nothing wherewith to reproach myself regarding thought, word or deed; if Maithili be guilty, may I never gather the fruits thereof! With my five senses and the mind as the sixth, meditating amidst the forest waterfalls, Sita's innocence was revealed to me. That lady of irreproachable and pure conduct, to whom her lord is a God, will give proof of her good faith, O Thou who didst fear public condemnation! O Foremost of Men, here is that lady whom I proclaim to be essentially chaste, I whose vision is divinely illumined and who, though she was supremely dear to thee and her innocence well known, thou didst repudiate when thy spirit was troubled by the censure of the people!"

CHAPTER 97

Sita descends into the Earth

THUS spoke Valmiki, and Raghava, on seeing that fair-complexioned princess, with joined palms, answered in the presence of the assembly:—

"O Fortunate and virtuous Brahmin, may it be so! I fully concur in thine irreproachable words. This assurance was formerly given to me by Vaidehi in the presence of the Gods and, believing in that oath, I reinstated her in my house, but great indeed was the public condemnation, therefore I sent Maithili away. O Brahmin, though wholly convinced of her innocence, it was from fear of the people that I cast off Sita, do thou pardon me! I acknowledge these twins, Kusha and Lava, to be my sons! I desire to make my peace with the chaste Maithili amidst the assembly."

Hearing of his intention, the foremost of the Gods, led by Brahma, all assembled there to witness Sita's defence, and Adityas, Vasus, Rudras, Vishvadevas, the hosts of the Maruts and all the great Rishis, Nagas, Sadhyas, Suparnas and Siddhas

gathered with delight. Beholding the Gods and the Sages, the foremost of men, Raghava, once more affirmed: "I am in agreement with the irreproachable words of the Rishi Valmiki! I wish to be reconciled with the chaste Vaidehi in the presence of this assembly."

The defence of Sita filled all who witnessed it with emotion and, at that moment, Vayu, the foremost of the Gods, sent forth a pure and fragrant breeze to the great delight of the assembly, as formerly in the Golden Age, and, it appeared marvellous to all those people from many lands who experienced it!

Beholding that assembly, Sita, attired in a yellow robe, with joined palms, her head bowed, her eyes lowered, said :—

"If, in thought, I have never dwelt on any but Rama, may the Goddess Madhavi[1] receive me!"

As Vaidehi was still speaking, a miracle took place and, from the earth rose a marvellous celestial throne supported on the heads of Nagas of immeasurable power, their bodies adorned with divine gems. The Goddess Dharani, bidding her welcome, took Maithili in her arms, causing her to be seated on that celestial seat and, while she occupied the throne, a shower of blossoms fell without ceasing from the sky. Then the Gods burst into loud acclamations, crying "Excellent! Excellent! O Sita, thy virtue is supreme!"

From the heavens, the Gods, with delighted hearts, beholding Sita descend into the earth, praised her again and again, and at the place of sacrifice, where all were assembled, Sages, kings and the foremost of men were unable to recover from their astonishment. In the sky, on earth and in the nether regions, all beings, animate and inanimate, Danavas of vast stature and the foremost of the Pannagas cried out in delight, whilst others remained absorbed in their thoughts or gazed on Rama and on Sita in ecstasy. The entire assembly witnessed Sita's descent into the earth and, at that moment, a great tremor passed through the whole world.

[1] The Earth Goddess, also called Dharani.

CHAPTER 98

Rama's Anger and Grief, Brahma appeases him

WHEN Vaidehi had descended into the earth, all the monkeys and Sages cried out in Rama's presence, " Excellent ! Excellent" but Rama, deeply distressed, supporting himself on a staff employed in the sacrifice, his eyes veiled with tears, his head bowed, was overcome with grief. Sighing again and again, letting fall many tears, a prey to pain and wrath, he said :—

" Beholding Sita, the personification of Shri, vanish in my presence, my soul experiences an agony hitherto unknown. Formerly, when she was in Lanka, on the further side of the vast ocean, I brought her back, how much more easily shall I be able to wrest her from the bosom of the earth ! O Goddess Vasuda, give me back my Sita, whom thou retainest, or thou shalt witness my wrath ! Thou shouldst know me since thou art assuredly my mother-in-law and Maithili rose from thee when Janaka was following the plough. Therefore let Sita go or open thyself to me that I may dwell with her in Patala or else in Nakaprishtha ! Bring back Maithili on whose account I am distraught ! If thou failest to return Sita to me in her original form, I shall plough thee up with thy mountains and forests and shall destroy thee so that nothing but water remains ! "

Thus spoke Kakutstha, full of wrath and grief, and Brahma, accompanied by the Hosts of the Gods, addressed the son of Raghu, saying :—

" O Rama, virtuous Rama, do not be incensed, recollect thy divine origin and nature, O Scourge of Thy Foes ! Assuredly, O Prince, I do not need to remind thee that no-one is superior to thee ! Now recall that thou art Vishnu, O Invincible Hero ! The chaste and virtuous Sita, who was wholly absorbed in thee formerly, has happily reached the region of the Nagas, by virtue of her ascetic practices. Thou wilt undoubtedly be re-united with her in the Celestial Realm. O Rama, hear, in the assembly, what I relate in this poem, the most beautiful of epics, recited in thine honour, I will make all known to thee in detail, do not

doubt it. In this poem of Valmiki all is included from the time of thy birth, O Hero, the good and evil that has visited thee and what will happen in the future. That great poet, O Rama, is wholly devoted to thee, none other is worthy of the honour bestowed by poets save Raghava. Formerly, in company with the Gods, I heard the entire classic; it is divine, marvellously beautiful, true, and the remover of nescience. O Foremost of Men, O Supremely Virtuous Kakutstha, listen to the conclusion of the Ramayana and what concerns the future. Listen now with the Rishis, O Doughty and Illustrious Prince, to the end of this sublime poem entitled 'Uttara'. Assuredly, O Kakutstha, this excellent epilogue may not be heard by any other save thee, who art the supreme Sage, O Hero, O Joy of the House of Raghu."

Having spoken thus, Brahma, the Lord of the Three Worlds, returned to his abode with his followers, the Gods.

Meantime the magnanimous and high-souled Rishis, whose abode was Brahmaloka, at Brahma's command, remained, desirous of hearing 'Uttara kanda' and what should happen to Raghava.

Having listened to the significant words of that God of Gods, the illustrious Rama said to Valmiki :—

"O Blessed One, the Rishis of Brahmaloka desire to listen to 'Uttara kanda' and all that shall happen to me; to-morrow let it be narrated by thee!"

Having resolved thus, Rama sought out Kusha and Lava and, dismissing the company, returned with them to the leaf-thatched hut of the Rishi Valmiki, where he passed the night lamenting for Sita.

CHAPTER 99

The Death of the Queens

When night had given way to dawn, Rama called together the great ascetics and said to his two sons :—

"Now sing without anxiety," and when those great and magnanimous Sages were seated, Kusha and Lava sang the epilogue to the 'Ramayana.'

Sita, having re-entered the earth, thus proving her fidelity, and the sacrifice being completed, Rama, in the extremity of grief, not beholding Vaidehi, regarded the world as a desert, and he dismissed the kings, bears, monkeys and titans and the host of leading brahmins, having loaded them with treasure.

Taking leave of them, the lotus-eyed Rama, who was ever absorbed in the thought of Sita, returned to Ayodhya. The Joy of the House of Raghu never sought another consort but, in every sacrifice, he set up a golden image of Janaki in her stead. For ten thousand years, Rama performed the Vajamedha Sacrifice and the Vajapeya, ten times more, distributing quantities of gold, and that fortunate One also performed the Agnisthoma, Atiratra and Gosava Sacrifices, giving away abundant charity.

For a long time, the magnanimous Raghava occupied the throne, his heart fixed in his duty ; bears, monkeys and titans were subject to his rule and monarchs came daily to pay him homage. Parjanya sent rains in the proper season and it was abundant, the skies were clear, the regions sinless, the city and country abounding in cheerful and satisfied people. None died prematurely nor was there any disease, and in Rama's reign, none were destitute.

After many years however, Rama's aged mother, surrounded by her sons and grandsons, passed away and she was followed by Sumitra and the renowned Kaikeyi, who having performed many righteous acts went to the celestial region, where those happy Ones were re-united with Dasaratha and received the fruit of their merit in heaven.

From time to time, in memory of his mother, Raghava distributed gifts to the brahmins vowed to asceticism, and the virtuous Rama offered up obsequies accompanied by gifts of gems to the Sages and performed incomparable austerities in honour of his ancestors.

Thus thousands of years passed happily during which, with the aid of sacrifices, that prince promoted the execution of duty in all its aspects.

CHAPTER 100

Rama sends Bharata to conquer the Gandharvas

ONE day, Yudhajita, the King of Kaikaya, sent his spiritual Preceptor, Gargya, the son of Angiras, a Brahmarishi of immeasurable glory, to the magnanimous Raghava, with ten thousand horses as a token of his unsurpassed affection, and also carpets, gems, diverse splendid stuffs and brilliant ornaments ; such were the gifts bestowed on Rama by that monarch.

Hearing of the arrival of that great Rishi Gargya with those magnificent presents from Ashwapati, his maternal uncle, the virtuous Raghava went out with his suite to meet him to the distance of a mile, and he offered homage to him, as Shakra pays obeisance to Brihaspati.

Having paid salutations to the Rishi and accepted the gifts, he enquired of him fully regarding the welfare of his mother's brother and family. Ushering the blessed Rishi into his palace, Rama began to question him, saying :—

" What message has my uncle confided to thee in sending thee hither ? "

Having come there, that great Rishi, hearing Rama's words, unfolded his mission in eloquent terms, saying :—

" This, O Long-armed Hero, is what thy maternal uncle, Yudhajita, in his affection for thee, requests thee to hear. There is a country of the Gandharvas, rich in fruit and roots, situated on the banks of the Sindhu River ; that country is extremely fertile. The Gandharvas, armed and skilful warriors, defend it. When thou hast conquered them, O Virtuous Kakutstha and destroyed their magnificent citadels, take possession of their cities, which are well constructed. None other can achieve this ; the country is extremely beautiful ; do thou follow my counsel, it is to thine advantage."

This speech of his uncle's, conveyed by the great Rishi, pleased Raghava who replied " So be it ! " and he glanced at Bharata ; thereafter, delighted, Raghava, with joined palms, spoke again to that Twice-born, saying :—

" These two youthful princes will explore the country, O

Brahmarishi! Bharata is the father of these valiant youths, Taksha and Pushkala. Under the protection of my uncle, they will show themselves to be devoted in the discharge of their duty. With Bharata at their head, those two youthful princes, accompanied by their troops, will slay the sons of the Gandharvas and take possession of the two cities. Having subdued those two great capitals and installed his two sons, my very virtuous brother will return once more."

Thus did Rama speak to that Brahmarishi, and thereafter issued orders to Bharata to start out with his army, having first installed those youthful princes.

Under the constellation Saumya,[1] preceded by the son of Angiras, Bharata set out with his troops and his two sons, and it seemed as if that army, leaving Ayodhya, followed to a great distance by Raghava, could not have been approached even by the Gods themselves. Then those beings who live on flesh, and titans of colossal stature, followed in Bharata's train, thirsting for blood, and the redoubtable Bhutagramas, in their desire to devour the corpses of the Gandharvas, came in hundreds and thousands, and lions, tigers, boars and birds in countless numbers preceded the troops. In a month and a half, that army composed of cheerful and healthy warriors reached the Kingdom of Kaikeya.

CHAPTER 101

The slaying of the Gandharvas and the conquest of their Country

HEARING of the arrival of Bharata at the head of a vast army accompanied by Gargya, the King of the Kaikeyas, Yudhajita, experienced supreme joy and set out in all haste with a great company against the Gandharvas.

Bharata and Yudhajita, having joined forces, approached the City of the Gandharvas with their swift troops and followers, whereupon, learning of the invasion, the Gandharvas assembled, eager for combat, full of vigour and shouting on every side.

Then a terrible battle of appalling violence ensued, lasting seven days, without victory being decisive for either army.

[1] The planet Mercury.

Rivers of blood, floating with corpses, streamed on every side, scimitars and spears being the crocodiles. Thereafter Bharata, the younger brother of Rama, enraged, loosed a terrible shaft propelled by mantras, named Samvarta,[1] on the Gandharvas. Caught in the noose of destruction, three hundred thousand Gandharvas were slain in an instant, cut to pieces by that hero. The inhabitants of the Celestial Region were unable to remember such a fearful conflict in which, in the twinkling of an eye, so vast a number of warriors perished.

The Gandharvas all being slain, Bharata, the son of Kaikeyi entered those two opulent and magnificent cities, and there, Bharata established Taksha in Takshashila and Pushkala in Pushkalavata, in the country of the Gandharvas, in the ravishing region of Gandhara. Overflowing with treasure and precious gems, adorned with groves, they seemed to vie with each other in magnificence.

For five years the long-armed Bharata, son of Kaikeyi, occupied those capitals of supreme beauty, whose inhabitants were of irreproachable conduct, and thereafter he returned to Ayodhya. Those cities with their innumerable parks, filled with vehicles and well-stocked markets, enchanting beyond imagining, were embellished by fabulous buildings and countless palaces, resplendent with a multitude of magnificent temples and adorned with Tala, Tamala, Tilaka, and Bakula Trees.

Then the fortunate Bharata paid obeisance to the magnanimous Raghava, who was Dharma personified, as Vasava offers salutations to Brahma, and Raghava listened with satisfaction when Bharata told him of the total extermination of the Gandharvas which had taken place and of the occupation of their territory.

CHAPTER 102

Rama bestows Kingdoms on Lakshmana's Sons

Hearing those tidings, Rama with his brothers rejoiced and he uttered these memorable words in their presence :—

" Thy two youthful sons, Angada and Chandraketu, are

[1] Samvarta—A weapon with which Kala or Time destroys the worlds.

worthy to reign, O Saumitri, for they are strong and energetic; I shall install them both as kings! Come, find these two valiant Ones a pleasant region which is not confined, where there is no danger of treachery from hostile monarchs, where they may live at ease and where the ascetics' retreats are not despoiled! O Friend, seek out such a country without causing injury to any!"

Thus spoke Rama, and Bharata answered:—

"There is a charming and healthy region named Karupatta; let two cities that are salubrious and beautiful be established there for the magnanimous Angada and Chandraketu which shall be called Angadiya and Chandrakanta."

These words of Bharata were approved by Raghava, and he brought that country under his rule and established Angada therein. The City of Angadiya was built for Angada by Rama of imperishable deeds and it was splendid and well fortified. As for Chandraketu, who was a giant, his uncle built Chandrakanta for him in the country of the Mallas,[1] and that capital was celestial and equal to Amaravati.

Thereafter, greatly delighted, Rama, Lakshmana and Bharata, those invincible warriors, attended the installation of those two youthful princes who, having received the divine unction, fixed in their duty, divided the territory, and Angada had the western and Chandraketu the northern region. Angada was accompanied by Sumitra's son,[2] whilst Lakshmana and Bharata followed in Chandraketu's train.

His sons being firmly established on the throne, Lakshmana took the road back to Ayodhya, having sojourned in Angadiya for a year. On his side, Bharata remained with Chandraketu one year more, thereafter returning to Ayodhya to take up his place again at Rama's feet.

Both Saumitri and Bharata, in their love for him and their extreme piety, forgot that time was passing and thus ten thousand years went by while they devoted themselves to affairs of state. Employing their days in this wise, their hearts satisfied, surrounded with splendour, dwelling together in that righteous city, they resembled the Three Fires whose flames are fed with abundant libations amidst great solemnity.

[1] Mallas—Giants.
[2] Shatrughna.

CHAPTER 103

Death is sent to seek out Rama

AFTER a long time, Death, in the form of an ascetic, presented himself at the gates of the great and virtuous Rama and said :—

" I am a messenger from an all-powerful Maharishi and have come to see Rama on a matter of great importance."

Hearing these words, Saumitri hastened to announce the arrival of the ascetic to Rama, saying :—

" Mayest thou extend thy dominion over both worlds, O Illustrious Prince ! A Messenger has come to see thee, who, by virtue of his penances, is as radiant as the sun."

Hearing Lakshmana's words, Rama said :—

" Bring in that ascetic of great effulgence, who carries a message from his master, O Dear Brother ! "

Then Saumitri answered : " Be it so ! " and ushered in that Sage, flaming in splendour, surrounded as it were with burning rays. Approaching the foremost of the Raghus, who shone in his own effulgence, the Rishi, in an harmonious voice, addressed Raghava, saying :—" May felicity be thine ! "

Then the supremely illustrious Rama, having paid him the traditional homage and offered him the Arghya, enquired of him concerning his state. Having informed Rama of his well-being, the most skilled of orators, that illustrious ascetic seated himself on a golden throne and thereafter Rama said to him :—

" Be thou welcome, O Great Sage, what message hast thou for me, since thou dost come as an ambassador ? "

On this enquiry from that Lion among Men, the Sage said to him :—

" If thou dost revere the wishes of the Gods, this meeting must take place between us alone ; whoever shall overhear us should be put to death by thee ; the words of the Lord of the Ascetics are secret and should be revered by Thee."

" Be it so ! " replied Rama, and having given this assurance, he issued the following command to Lakshmana :—

" Do thou stand at the door, O Long-armed Warrior and

dismiss the door-keeper. It is for me to slay whoever hears the converse between this Muni and myself, for it must take place between us alone."

Having sent Lakshmana to guard the door, Kakutstha, born of Raghu, said :—

" O Ascetic, thou canst now disclose that with which thou hast been charged, speak without fear, I shall treasure it in my heart !"

CHAPTER 104

Death delivers his Message

" LEARN, O Magnanimous Sovereign, that this is the purpose of my coming ! It is the blessed Grandsire who has sent me, O Mighty Prince. I was his son in a former existence, O Conqueror of Hostile Citadels ! Born of Maya, O Hero, I am Death who destroys all ! The Grandsire, Lord of the Worlds, speaks thus to thee :—

" ' Thy task is accomplished, O Friend, O Protector of the Worlds ! Having formerly destroyed all beings by the aid of Maya, lying amidst the waters of the vast ocean, thou didst give me birth. Thou hadst already created the Serpent of large coils, Ananta, as also two mighty Beings, Madhu and Kaitabha, whose crushed bones covered the earth which appeared at that time with its chain of mountains. From a celestial lotus, bright as the sun, that issued from thy navel, thou didst produce me and give me the task of creating the world. Since thou hast charged me with this burden, I lean on thee for support, O Lord of the Earth ! Do thou watch over all beings, for it is thou who art my strength. By virtue of thine invincible and eternal nature, thou shouldst afford protection to all creation, for thou hast assumed the form of Vishnu ! O Mighty Son of Aditi, thou didst enhance the power of thy brothers and when they sought to accomplish their tasks, thou didst come to their aid. When, O Prince, all creatures were being exterminated by Ravana, thou, desiring to slay him, bethought thyself of men. Then thou didst resolve to dwell among them in person for eleven thousand years and

thereafter return to us. Thou, who art mind-born, hast completed thy stay among mortals; it is the hour, O Foremost of Men, to return to us; if it is thy desire to prolong thy sojourn among creatures, O Great King, do so and be happy!'

"Such are the words of the Grandsire:—'If thou preferest to enter into possession of the world of the Gods once more, O Raghava, they with their leaders will be freed from all anxiety, since Vishnu will be amongst them.'"

Having heard the words of the Grandsire, which Death communicated to him, Raghava, smiling, answered the Destroyer of the Worlds, saying:—

"These wholly admirable words of that God of Gods assuredly causes me supreme delight, as also thy coming hither. I came for the good of the worlds, this is the purpose of my being; mayest thou be happy! Thine advent here has moved my heart; I shall leave without delay. The Grandsire has uttered what is true, I must attend to all that concerns the Gods under my dominion, O Destroyer of the Universe!"

CHAPTER 105

The Sage Durvasa comes to visit Rama

As the two were conversing thus, Durvasa, that blessed Sage, who wished to see Rama, came to the gate of the palace and, approaching Saumitri, that illustrious ascetic said:—

"Bring me straightway into Rama's presence, the affair is urgent!"

So spoke the magnanimous Sage, and Lakshmana, the Slayer of His Foes, bowing low, said to him:—

"What is this matter? Explain thyself, O Blessed Sage! What can I do for thee? Raghava is occupied, O Brahmin, have patience awhile!"

Hearing this reply from that lion among men, the great Rishi, highly incensed, said to Lakshmana, whom he seemed to consume with his glance:—

"Announce my presence here to Rama immediately, O

Saumitri, or I shall pronounce a curse on the kingdom, on thee, the city, on Raghava, Bharata and on thy House! O Saumitri, I can no longer contain mine indignation!"

Having heard the mighty ascetic's alarming words, Lakshmana pondered awhile within himself concerning their significance, and reflected :—

"It were better that I should perish than all others be destroyed!"

On this, he made the arrival of the ascetic known to Raghava and, Rama hearing the tidings, took leave of Death and, in all haste, sought out the son of Atri. Having paid obeisance with joined palms to that great Sage flaming in effulgence, he enquired of him, saying :—

"What may I do for thee?"

On this enquiry from that King of Ascetics, the Sage Durvasa answered :—

"O Virtuous Rama, hear me, this day I have concluded a fast of a thousand years. O Irreproachable Raghava, now give me what thou hast ready to eat!"

At these words, the King Raghava, with a delighted heart, offered the foremost of Sages dishes, that had been made ready, and that ascetic, having partaken of that food like unto Amrita, addressed Rama, saying :—

"It is well!" and returned to his hermitage.

Thereafter Rama called to mind the words of Death at that portentous meeting and, with bowed head, his heart wrung with anguish, he was unable to speak. Reflecting again and again within himself, the illustrious Raghava thought, "All is lost!" and fell silent.

CHAPTER 106

Rama banishes Lakshmana

SEEING Rama, his head bowed, afflicted and like unto the moon in eclipse, Lakshmana spoke to him in cheerful and affectionate tones, saying :—

"Thou shouldst not grieve on mine account, O Long-armed

Warrior; thus was it already ordained and has its roots in a past cause! Slay me without hesitation, be faithful to thy vow! Those who do not honour their promise, go to hell! If thou hast any affection for me, O Great King, and dost find any merit in me, then slay me and fulfil the law, O Raghava!"

Thus spoke Lakshmana, and Rama, his mind troubled, called his ministers and priests together and told them what had taken place, of the arrival of Durvasa and the vow he had made to the Ascetic. When they had heard these things, the ministers and brahmins became silent, nevertheless the illustrious Vasishtha spoke thus:—

"O Long-armed Prince, I perceive that the separation from Lakshmana is for thee a calamity, causing thy hair to stand on end. O Illustrious Rama, do thou abandon him; death is powerful, let not thy words prove false. When a promise is not honoured and virtue is destroyed, undoubtedly the Three Worlds with all animate and inanimate beings, with the hosts of the Gods and Rishis, perish! Therefore, O Lion among Men, in order to save the Three Worlds and assure the continuance of the universe, banish Lakshmana!"

Hearing these words, which were in accord with duty and righteousness, approved by all, Rama, in the midst of the assembly, said to Lakshmana:—

"Lest righteousness should perish, I banish thee, O Saumitri, a sentence of banishment or death is the same to men of honour!"

At this decree of Rama's, Lakshmana, weeping, his mind distracted, departed in all haste without returning to his home.

Having reached the banks of the Sarayu River, he performed his ablutions and, with joined palms, closing the doors of the senses, he began to meditate. As he was thus restraining his senses, he did not release his breath while given up to contemplation, and the Gods with their leaders, the troops of Apsaras and companies of Rishis covered him with a rain of flowers. Becoming invisible to men, the mighty Lakshmana was borne away in the body by Shakra, who carried him to the Celestial Region. Beholding the fourth part of Vishnu entering heaven, the foremost of the Gods, delighted, joyfully and unitedly offered homage to that descendant of Raghu.

CHAPTER 107

Rama installs Kusha and Lava on the Throne

HAVING banished Lakshmana, Rama, a prey to grief and desolation, said to his priests, ministers and citizens :—

" To-day I shall give the royal annointing to the valiant Bharata, who is faithful to his duty, and make him Lord of Ayodhya ; thereafter I shall go to the forest. Make all preparations, lose no time, for to-day I too shall follow the path that Lakshmana has taken ! "

Thus spoke Raghava and his subjects bowed low as if deprived of all strength. On his side, Bharata, beside himself on hearing his brother's speech, refused the crown and expressed himself thus :—

" I swear in truth, O King, without thee I do not wish to reign, even in Svarga, O Thou, the Joy of the Raghus ! Establish thy two sons, the valiant Kusha and Lava in the Southern Koshalas and the Northern Regions; send swift messengers to Shatrughna to announce our departure, let there be no delay! "

Hearing these words of Bharata and also beholding the citizens who, their heads bowed, were overwhelmed with grief, Vasishtha spoke :—

" O Beloved Rama, see how these people are prostrating themselves, having learnt what they desire, fulfill it, do not grieve them ! "

Thus spoke Vasishtha and Kakutstha, having caused them to rise, said to the people, " What is asked of me ? " and they all said to him :—

" If thou art leaving us, let us accompany thee wheresoever thou goest, O Rama ; if thou dost love thy subjects and that affection is unsurpassed, let us, with our sons and wives, follow the righteous path with thee ; whether it be to an inaccessible retreat, river or ocean, thou shouldst not abandon us ; lead us all wherever thou wilt, O Thou our Master ! This is our supreme desire, our most cherished wish ; it will always be the delight of our hearts to accompany thee, O Prince ! "

Recognizing his people's profound attachment, Rama answered, " So be it ! " and occupied himself in carrying through what he had undertaken that day.

He gave over the Southern Koshalas to the valiant Kusha and those of the north to Lava ; thereafter, placing those two princes on his lap, he enthroned them in Ayodhya and bestowed upon them thousands of chariots and numberless elephants with ten thousand horses. Having furnished them with jewels and treasure in abundance and given them cheerful and healthy people to attend upon them, he sent the two brothers, Kusha and Lava, each to his own capital.

Those two heroes being installed in their respective cities, Rama sent out an emissary to the magnanimous Shatrughna.

CHAPTER 108

Rama issues his last Commands

The messengers, urged on by Rama's command, swiftly and promptly went to Madhura without halting on the way. After three nights they reached that city where they all informed Shatrughna what had happened ; the banishing of Lakshmana, Raghava's vow, the installation of his two sons and the resolution of his subjects to follow him ; how an enchanting city had been built for Kusha under the name of Kushavati on the high ridge of the Vindhya Mountains by the virtuous Rama, and that Shravasti was the name of the ravishing and famous capital of Lava ; they told him also of the preparations made by Raghava and Bharata to take all the people from Ayodhya and enter Svarga.

Having related all these things to the magnanimous Shatrughna, the messengers became silent and thereafter added, " Make all haste, O King ! "

Hearing these fearful tidings regarding the imminent destruction of his entire House, Shatrughna, the Joy of Raghu, called his people together and summoned his family priest, Kanchana, in order to impart the truth to them of his immediate departure with his brothers.

Thereafter, that valiant prince installed his two sons, having distributed abundant wealth equally amongst them, and Subahu was established in Madhura and Shatrughatin in Vaidisha. This being accomplished, that descendant of Raghu left for Ayodhya in a single chariot.

There he beheld the magnanimous Rama like unto a flaming brazier, clothed in a robe of fine wool, in the midst of the imperishable Sages. Paying obeisance to them with joined palms, his senses under control, he addressed his virtuous brother, whose thought too was ever fixed on his duty, and said :—

" I have enthroned my two sons, O King, and have come hither ; know well that I am resolved to follow thee ! Do not oppose me, O Valiant One, for I would not that thy will should be disregarded by one like me."

Seeing his resolve was fixed, Rama said to Shatrughna, " So be it."

Having ceased from speaking, the monkeys, who were able to change their form at will, with the companies of bears and titans came there from all directions with Sugriva at their head, all being united in their desire to behold Rama, who stood with his face turned towards the sky.

Devas, Rishis and Gandharvas with their offspring, hearing of Rama's intended departure, had all assembled, saying :—

" We have come here to follow thee, O Prince ! To leave without us, O Rama is to strike us down with the Rod of Death."

At that instant, the supremely powerful Sugriva, bowing before that hero in accord with tradition, addressed him with humility and said :—

" Having installed the virtuous Angada, O Prince, know that I have come hither with the intention of accompanying thee ! "

At these words, the illustrious Kakutstha smiling, answered :—

" So be it ! " Thereafter he said to Bibishana, the King of the Rakshasas :—

"As long as people exist, O Mighty Lord of the Rakshasas, do thou remain in Lanka. As long as the moon and sun continue to shine on the earth, as long as they speak of me in the world, so long shall thine empire endure ; this is the will of thy friend, do thou obey ! Govern thy people according to justice and do not question this further. One thing more I wish to say to thee,

O Mighty Monarch of the Rakshasas, do thou worship the Divinity of the House of Ikshvaku, the Guide of the Universe, Shri Jagannath, whom the Devas themselves with their leaders perpetually adore."

" So shall it be," answered Bibishana, and Kakutstha thereafter addressed Hanuman, saying :—

" Resign thyself to continuing to live, do not render my will void. As long as my story is told in the world, O Foremost of Monkeys, so long mayest thou be happy and remember my words ! "

Thereupon Hanuman, acquiescing in Rama's utterance, in his delight, said :—

"As long as thy purifying history is circulated in the world, so long O Rama, shall I remain on earth submissive to thy will ! "

Then Raghava issued the same command to Jambavan and said :—

" Till the Kali Yuga begins, continue to dwell on earth ! "

Thereafter, addressing all the other bears and monkeys, he said :—

" If it be your desire, then follow me ! "

CHAPTER 109

Rama's Departure for the Mahaprasthana

WHEN the dawn broke, the broad-chested and illustrious Rama, whose eyes were as large as lotus petals, said to his spiritual Preceptor :—

" Let the Agnihotra burning brightly with the Twice-born and also the sacrificial canopy be borne in advance and thou, My Lord, precede them on this great journey."

Thereupon Vasishtha, full of majesty, performed the prescribed rituals related to the Mahaprasthana without omitting anything. Then Rama, clothed in fine silk, invoking Brahma and reciting the Vedic Mantras, taking Kusha Grass in both his hands, set out for the Sarayu River, halting from time to time, silently making his way along the rough path. Radiant as the

sun, he issued from his palace barefooted and, on his right, walked Shri Lakshmi with her lotus, on his left, was the great Goddess Vyavasaya[1] and, assuming human form, his innumerable arrows, marvellous bow and all the other weapons accompanied him. The Vedas, in the persons of brahmins, the Holy Gayatri, Protector of the World, the sacred syllable " AUM " and the invocation " Vashat " followed in Rama's train as also the great-souled Rishis, and all the Deities of the Earth accompanied that hero to the open gates of heaven.

In his steps trod the women of the inner apartments with the aged, the children, servants, eunuchs and personal attendants. The faithful Bharata with his wives accompanied by Shatrughna followed in Rama's train, attended by the sacrificial fire. All the magnanimous Sages with the ritualistic articles, having assembled there with their sons and wives, joined the procession of the virtuous Kakutstha. Ministers, groups of servants with their offspring, their kinsmen and their flocks joyfully followed in the footsteps of their master. All the citizens, happy and healthy people, distinguished by their good qualities, joined Raghava's departure and all the men and women with their birds, beasts and friends, purified of their sins, went forward cheerfully. Devoted to Rama, the Monkeys, having bathed, delighted and satisfied, cried out exultantly with all their strength, " Kilakila ! "

In that multitude, none was sad, downcast or unhappy, but a universal felicity filled all to the highest degree. In their desire to behold Rama taking his departure, the people of the country, through which he passed, on seeing him, took their places in his train. Bears, monkeys, titans, citizens, with deep devotion, followed him in the utmost serenity. Even the invisible Beings of the city joined Raghava's procession when he went to heaven. Beholding him, all creatures, animate and inanimate, lovingly accompanied him on that journey. Not a single being, not even the least of them, was to be seen in Ayodhya ; even those born of animals followed in Rama's wake.

[1] The Goddess of the Earth.

CHAPTER 110

Rama ascends to Heaven with the other Beings

WHEN he had proceeded about six miles, the Pride of the Raghus beheld the sacred waters of the Sarayu flowing westwards, eddying and rippling in their course, and he went on further to the Goprataraka Ghata,[1] his subjects thronging round him on all sides.

At that moment, as Kakutstha was preparing to ascend to heaven, Brahma, the Grandsire of the World, surrounded by the Gods and the illustrious Rishis adorned with jewels, appeared seated in their aerial chariots, and the whole firmament glowed with a transcendent splendour, a marvellous radiance emanating from the lustre of those heavenly beings of virtuous deeds. Pure, balmy and fragrant breezes blew, whilst shower upon shower of blossom was scattered by the Gods. Thereafter to the sound of a myriad instruments and the singing of the Gandharvas and Apsaras, Rama stepped into the waters, whereupon the Grandsire, from on high, uttered these words :—

"Hail O Vishnu ! Hail O Raghava ! With thy God-like brothers, now enter thine eternal abode ! Return to thine own body if thou so desirest, O Long-armed Warrior ! Occupy the realm of Vishnu or the shining ether, O Mighty God ! Thou art the support of the world, though there are some who do not recognize Thee without the large-eyed Maya, thine ancient Consort ! Thou art the Inconceivable One, the Great Being, the Indestructible, the Ageless One. Enter into thy real body if Thou so desirest."

Hearing these words of the Grandsire, the supremely virtuous Rama formed his resolution and entered Vishnu's abode in his body with his younger brothers.

Thereupon Immortals began to worship that God who had returned to His form as Vishnu, and the Sadhyas, the hosts of Maruts with Indra and Agni at their head, the celestial companies of Rishis, the Gandharvas and Apsaras, Suparnas, Nagas, Yakshas, Daityas, Danavas and Rakshasas and all the dwellers

[1] Cattle ford.

in heaven felt a supreme delight, their desires fulfilled, their sins washed away, and they cried out " Hail ! All Hail ! "

Then the all-resplendent Vishnu said to the Grandsire :—

" Grant to each of these my subjects a suitable abode. They are my devotees and truly deserving, having sacrificed their lives for me ! "

Thus spoke Vishnu, and the God Brahma, Guru of the Worlds, answered saying :—

"All those who have assembled here shall go to the region called Santanakas ! Yea, even the beasts who die meditating on Thy holy Feet shall live in the vicinity of Brahmaloka where I have united all pleasurable things. The monkeys and the bears, the manifestations of various Deities have already returned to the worlds of the Gods, from whence they came forth, and Sugriva has entered the disc of the sun ! "

Even as the great God was speaking, the monkeys and the bears, having assumed their pristine forms, came to Goprataraka Ghata before the eyes of the assembled Gods. At that time, whosoever entered the waters of the Sarayu River, yielded up their lives gladly, their eyes suffused with tears of ecstasy, and, having abandoned their bodies, took their places in a celestial chariot. As for those in animal form, who entered the waters of the Sarayu in hundreds, they ascended to the Third Heaven in divinely resplendent bodies and they appeared as effulgent as the Gods in their celestial lineaments. All beings, whether animate or inanimate, who entered those waters attained to the region of the Gods, and, in their turn, the bears, monkeys and titans, abandoning their bodies in the river, also attained heaven.

Having granted them all a place in paradise, the Grandsire of the World accompanied by the Gods, in the height of felicity, returned to the Third Heaven, his supreme abode.

CHAPTER III

The supreme Virtue of the Ramayana

This then is the whole of the great epic and its sequel called the Ramayana, which was composed by Valmiki and is revered by Brahma Himself.

The Lord Vishnu returned to Svargaloka as erstwhile, He Who pervades the Three Worlds and all they contain, both the moving and the fixed. Gods, Gandharvas, Siddhas and great Rishis in heaven, ever listen with delight to the poem 'Ramayana'. This epic, which promotes long life, grants good fortune and destroys sin, is equal to the Veda and should be recited by the wise to men of faith.

On hearing it, he who has no son will obtain a son, he who has no fortune will become wealthy ; to read but a foot of this poem will absolve him from all sin. He who commits sins daily will be wholly purified by reciting a single sloka.

The reciter of this narrative should be rewarded with raiment, cows and gold, for, if he is satisfied, all the Gods are satisfied. He who recites this epic 'Ramayana' that prolongs life, will be blessed with his sons and grandsons in this world and after his death, in the other world. He who, with devotion, recites the 'Ramayana' at the hour when the cows are loosed or at noon or at dusk, will never suffer adversity.

The enchanting City of Ayodhya, having remained deserted for countless years, will be re-peopled by a Prince named Rishabha.

This narrative, that grants longevity, with the 'Bhavishya' and 'Uttara', whose author is the son of Pracetas, has the approval of Brahma Himself.

GLOSSARY

(For Flowers, Trees and Weapons, see separate Glossaries)

A

ABHIJIT. A Constellation which denotes victory when the sun enters it.
The twenty-second Nakshatra q.v.
A title and name of Vishnu.

ABHIRAS. A leader of robbers who dwelt in Drumakulya.

ABRAVANTI. A city.

ACHMANA. Purificatory rite at which water is taken in the palm of the hands and poured over the head and breast and the mouth rinsed; it also includes touching various parts of the body.

ACHARYA. A Spiritual Teacher.

ACHYUTA. A title of Vishnu meaning 'Imperishable'.

ADAMBARA. A drum, trumpet or elephant's roar during battle.

ADHVARA. A sacrifice, specially the Soma Sacrifice.

ADHVARYA. An officiating priest.

ADHYAS. A reading, chapter or section of a work.

ADIDEVA. A title given to Rama meaning 'Foremost of the Gods'.

ADITI. Mother of the Gods, who represents space or infinity.

ADITYA-HRIDAYA. 'The Heart of the Sun', a designation of a Vedic Hymn.

ADITYA-VARCAS. 'That which constitutes the knowledge of Aditya'.

ADRIKRITASTHALI. Apsaras or Nymphs.

AGARU. Agallochum, a species of Sandal or Indian Aloe Exorcaria, used as incense or for perfuming purposes.

AGASTYA. A great Rishi, the reputed author of several hymns in the Rig-Veda. This Sage, whose miraculous powers are described in the great classics, entertained Rama, Sita and Lakshmana in his hermitage during their exile. He was said to have been born in a vessel. (See Uttarakanda Chapter LVII.)

AGNEYA. A mountain.
The south-eastern quarter of which Agni is Regent.
A cloud produced by fire.

AGNI. The God of Fire.

AGNIGARBHA. 'Fire-wombed', a name of Agni who causes the Fire of Dissolution at the end of the World-cycle.

AGNIHOTRA. The Fire-sacrifice.

AGNIKETU. A titan warrior.

AGNIKUNDA. A pit or hole where the sacrificial fire burns.

AGNIPUTRA. A Sage, the title means ' Son of Agni '.

AGNISTHOMA. A series of offerings to the God of Fire celebrated for five days during the Spring.

AGNIVARNA. The son of Sudarshana.

AGRAHAYANA. A feast similar to the Harvest Festival.

AHALYA. The wife of the Rishi Gautama, who was transformed into a rock by him when he cursed her for dalliance with the God Indra; she was ultimately restored to her own form by Rama.

AHASKARA. ' Maker of Day ', a title of the Sun-god.

AHAVANIYA. See under Three Fires.

AIRAVATA. The sacred elephant that transports the God Indra.
One of the elephants supporting the four quarters of the earth.

AJA. A king of the dynasty of Ikshvaku, the father of Dasaratha.

AJAMUKHI. A female titan.

AJAS. A class of hermits, see under ' Ascetics '.

AJITA. ' Invincible ', a name given to Vishnu.

AKAMPANA. The titan who informed Ravana of the destruction of Janasthana and who persuaded him to abduct Sita. He was slain by Hanuman.

AKOPA. A minister in the Court of King Dasaratha.

AKSHA. A son of Ravana who was slain by Hanuman.

AKSHAUHINI. An army consisting of a large number of cavalry, infantry, chariots and elephants.

ALAKA. Kuvera's capital.

ALAKSHITA. A forest where Narada dwelt.

ALAMBUSHA. Mother of Vishala q.v.

ALARKA. A hero renowned for his devotion.

AMARAVATI. Indra's capital which is also called Vitapavati.

AMBARISHA. A king of Ayodhya whose story is told in Balakanda.

AMRITA. The ' Nectar of Immortality ' produced by the churning of the ocean by Gods and Demons.

ANALA. The God of Fire.
The name of one of Mali's sons.
The wife of Kashyapa.
Daughter of Sundari.

ANANGA. ' Bodiless ', a name given to the God of Love after he was consumed to ashes by Shiva.
A Monkey Warrior who was the son of Hutasena, the God of Fire, Agni.

ANANTA. The thousand-headed Serpent, also called Shesha, on which the Lord Vishnu rests during the withdrawal of the worlds. The name means ' Eternal ', ' Endless '.

ANARANYA. A king of the race of Ikshvaku.

ANASUYA. The wife of the Rishi Atri.

ANDHAKA. A demon, the son of the Sage Kashyapa and Diti, who was said to have a thousand arms and heads, and was slain by Shiva.

ANGA. The kingdom ruled over by King Lomapada, probably Bengal.

A part or limb; an army is divided into angas which has been translated as divisions in this text.

ANGADA. The son of Bali, a monkey warrior, heir-apparent to the kingdom of the monkey race.

ANGADIYA. The city ruled by one of Lakshmana's sons.

ANGALAPA. A city the monkeys searched for Sita.

ANGARAKA. A female demon.

The Planet Mars.

ANGIRAS. One of the seven immortal Sages, the father of Gargya.

ANILA. The God of the Wind.

One of the sons of Mali.

ANJALI. A salutation made with joined palms.

ANJALIPANAS. Ascetics who drink from the hollow of their hands.

ANJANA. A nymph with whom the God of the Wind became enamoured and who subsequently gave birth to Hanuman.

ANSHUMAN. The son of Asmanjas; his story is told in Balakanda.

ANTAKA. A name of Yama, the God of Death.

ANTIGAS. A measure implying a great number.

ANTYA. A Madhya ten times.

ANUHLADA. The son of Hiranya-kashipu, a Daitya and the father of Prahlada whose story is told in the Vishnu Purana. Anuhlada bore away Sachi, Indra's consort, and was slain by him.

APARAPARVATAS. A mountain range.

APAS. A title meaning the 'Friend of Water'.

APSARA. A water-sprite or nymph; the word 'Ap' meaning 'water' and 'sara' to 'emerge from'. The Apsaras were the wives of the Gandharvas.

ARANI. The wood of the sacred fig-tree which is used for kindling at sacrifices.

ARANYA. A forest or wood.

ARBUDA. A hundred millions.

ARCHIRMALAYAS. The offspring of the Ascetic Maricha.

ARCHISMAN. A monkey leader.

ARGHYA. A traditional offering of water, milk, Kusha Grass, rice, Durva Grass, sandal-wood, flowers and so forth.

ARIGHNA. A titan warrior.

ARISHTANEMI. A Sage.

A name of Garuda meaning the 'Felly of whose wheel is unhurt'.

ARJUNA. The King of the Haihayas, the son of Kritavirya who defeated Ravana.

An Asura.

ARKA. A monkey leader.

ARSHISHMAN. A titan, the father of Sumali.

ARTHA. Dharma, Artha and Kama—Duty, prosperity and legitimate pleasure, which are said to be the three ends of life.

ARTHA-SHASTRA. The Science of moral and political government. The Artha Shastras are ancient Hindu Treatises summarizing the main duties of man in the field of politics and economics where the subjects are treated from the individual and not the universal point of view.

ARTHASADHAKA. One of the ministers of Dasaratha's court.

ARUJA. Patronymic of the descendants of Bhrigu.
The daughter of Shukracharya, the name means 'Purity'.

ARUNA. An Eagle or Jay, the brother of Garuda.

ARUNDHATI. The wife of the Rishi Vasishtha who was a model of conjugal excellence.
The morning star.

ARYAMA. Chief of the Pitris or ancestors.

ASAVA. Wine made of sugar and honey of the blossom 'Bassia Latifolia'.

ASCETICS. Sages who practiced austerities of which some are :—
Ajas. Those mentioned in the Veda.
Ardrapatavasas. Those who practised silent prayer.
Asmakuttas. Those who lived in stone huts on uncooked food.
Dantolukhalia. Those who partook of raw food, such as grain, and crushed it between their teeth.
Gatrasayyas. Those who slept on the ground without making a bed.
Marichipas. Those who lived by absorbing the rays of the sun or moon.
Pancagnis. Those who practised asceticism between five fires, that is four fires and the sun above.
Patraharas. Those who lived on the leaves of trees.
Samprakalas. Those said to be born of the water in which Brahma's feet are cleansed.
Vaikhanasas. Those born from the nails of Brahma.
Valakhilyas. Those born from the body of Brahma.

ASHADHA. A month, part of June and July.
One born under the Constellation Ashadha.

ASHANIPRABHA. A titan warrior.

ASHMA. The city in Varuna's realm that belonged to Bali.

ASHOKA. One of Rama's counsellors. (For the tree of this name see separate Glossary).

ASHRAMA. A hermitage or forest retreat.

ASHTAVAKRA. A Sage of great spiritual eminence.

ASHVA. A Sage.

ASHVAGRIVA. The son of Kashyapa.
ASHVAMEDHA. The Horse-sacrifice of Vedic times performed only by kings.
ASHVAPATI. See Yudhajita.
ASHVATARA. The name of the foremost of the Serpent Race; its meaning is 'Swift', 'Speedy'.
ASHVAYUJ. The month that is part of September and October.
ASHVINS or ASHVINI-KUMARAS. Celestial Horsemen, precursors of the dawn, twin offspring of the sun and patrons of medicine.
ASHVIPUTRAS. The sons of the Ashvins.
ASI. From 'Asi Pattra Vana', a hell where the trees have leaves as sharp as swords.
ASITA. The father of Sagara q.v.
ATALA. See Patala.
ATAPIN. A name of the Sun meaning 'Causing Heat'.
A bird 'Falco Cheela'.
ATHARVA VEDA. The Fourth Veda.
ATIBALA. See Bala and Atibala.
ATIKAYA. 'Huge-bodied', a name of a titan warrior.
ATIRATHA. A great Car-warrior, one who can fight innumerable archers, though less than ten thousand.
ATIRATRA. An optional part of the Jyotishtima-sacrifice; also the commencement and conclusion of certain other sacrifices.
ATODYAS. A musical instrument.
ATRI. One of the seven immortal Sages.
ATYARTHA SADAKA. One of the counsellors of King Dasaratha.
AUM or OM. The sacred syllable said to be the first sound in creation; its import can be studied in the Mandukya Upanishad.
AURVA. A great Rishi, the grandson of Bhrigu; the name is derived from 'uru' or 'thigh' as he was said to have been produced from his mother's thigh. His austerities alarmed the Gods and his anger against the warrior class, who had slain his forbears, was unparalleled. Eventually it was mitigated by the intervention of the Pitris and he cast it into the sea where this fire of his wrath became a being with a horse's head named Hayashira.
AVANTI. A city searched by the monkeys for Sita.
AVARTANI. A prayer which is said to induce the descent of the Deity and cause all things to be perceived.
AVINDAYA. A titan.
AVINDHA. A wise and elderly titan.
AYODHYA. The capital of Koshala which was ruled over by King Dasaratha, possibly Oudh.
AYOMUKHI. A female titan.
AYURVEDA. The 'Veda of Life', a work on medicine attributed to the Sage Dhanvantari, who rose from the ocean when it was churned by the Gods and titans.

AYUS. The son of Pururavas and Urvashi; he was the father of Nahusha.

AYUTA. A number not to be counted, a myriad or sometimes said to be a thousand plus a hundred; also sometimes denoting ten thousand.

B

BAHADUR. A title similar to a knighthood.

BAHLIKA. A country scoured by the monkeys in search of Sita.

BAHLIKAS. Bactrians or People of the north and west of India.

BAHUDAMSHTRA. A titan.

BAHUMAYIN. An asura.

BAHUSUVARNAKA. A sacrifice at which liberal distributions of gold are made.

BALA and ATIBALA. The 'Science of sacred formulas', given to Rama by the Sage Vishvamitra.

BALI. The monkey king of Kishkindha, brother of Sugriva.

BALIMUKHA. A monkey leader.

BANA. A king who was the son of Vikukshi and the father ot Anaranya.

BASAKARNA. A titan leader.

BHADRA. One of Rama's courtiers.

BHAGA. A Deity mentioned in the Vedas; it is the name of an Aditya presiding over love and marriage; the appellation actually means 'Wealthy Master' or 'Gracious Lord' and 'Bestower of Wealth'; this name is also used for the Moon.

BHAGIRATHA. A descendant of King Sagara, who by his penances brought the River Ganges to earth.

BHAGIRATHI. A name given to the River Ganges in memory of the Sage Bhagiratha.

BHANU. A title of the Sun meaning 'Possessed of Brightness'.

BHARADWAJA. A Sage who entertained Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and later Bharata in the forest. (See Balakanda.) Many Vedic Hymns are attributed to him.

BHARATA. The younger brother of Rama and son of Queen Kaikeyi.

BHARATVARSHA. Ancient India.

BHARGAVA. A patryonymic of the Sage Chyavana, the offspring of Bhrigu. It is also used for Shukra and others.

BHASAKARNA. A titan slain by Hanuman.

BHASKARA. A name of the Sun-god who was the father of Sugriva.

BHASVAT. A name given to the Sun-god meaning 'Luminous', " Splendid', 'Possessing Light'.

BHAVA. A name of Shiva.

BHAVISHYA. One of the eighteen Puranas; a revelation of future events by Brahma.

BHAYA. 'Fear', the sister of Kala and consort of Praheti.

BHERI. A kettledrum.

BHOGAVATI. A voluptuous subterranean city belonging to the Serpent Race; it is sometimes called Putkari.

BHRAMARA. A bumble-bee.
A bird.

BHRIGU. A Vedic Sage, said to be the son of Manu.

BHRINGARAJA. A Shrike or bee.

BHUJAMGAS. Beings of the Serpent Race.

BHUR, BHUVAH, SWAH. The Lower, Middle and Upper Worlds.

BHUTAS. Spirits or ghosts.

BHUTAGRAMAS. The aggregate of living beings or a multitude of spirits or ghosts.

BHUTI. The mother of the Nymph Manu.

BIBHUTAKA. A double ladle made of wood for pouring ghee into the sacrificial fire.

BIBISHANA or VIBISHANA. The younger brother of Ravana but a devotee of Rama; he was installed as King of Lanka on Ravana's death.

BINDUSARA. A lake.

BISHAKA or VISHAKA. A devotee who constantly contemplates the Deity.
One of the Nakshatras q.v.

BLUE-THROATED ONE. A title given to Shiva, whose throat took on this colour when he drank the poison churned from the ocean by the Gods and Asuras.

BRAHMA. The Creative Aspect of Divinity.

BRAHMACHARI. A religious student living in the house of a spiritual Teacher or Guru, having taken certain vows.

BRAHMACHARINI. The female counterpart of a brahmachari.

BRAHMACHARYA. Religious studentship implying the taking of certain vows.

BRAHMADATTA. A king who was cursed by the Sage Gautama and became a vulture.

BRAHMA JNANA. The Knowledge of Brahman, Truth or Reality through direct perception.

BRAHMA KOSHA. The Abode of Hyranyagarbha q.v.

BRAHMA LAYA. The Abode of the Four-faced Brahma.

BRAHMAN. The Absolute or Highest Reality, attributeless being.

BRAHMANMALAS. A country explored by the monkeys when in search of Sita.

BRAHMAPUTRA. The son of Brahma or a brahmin.
The name of a river.
The eastern extremity of the Himalayas.

BRAHMARSHI. A Constellation said by some to be Shravana q.v. The name of a certain class of Rishi, higher than a Maharishi and of the brahmanical order. Sometimes written Brahmarishi.)

BRAHMASHATRU. A titan warrior.

BRAHMASHIRAS. The Abode of the Deity presiding over the Brahma Weapon.

BRAHMAVADI. One who recites or expounds the Veda, or teaches the Spiritual Knowledge.

BRIHASPATI or VRIHASPATI. The spiritual Preceptor of the Gods, also said to be the Regent of the Planet Jupiter which is called by the same name.

BUDHA. The Planet Mercury.

BULL. The white bull, called Nandi, which is said to be the God Shiva's vehicle and represents the Sattwa-guna. (See under Gunas.)

CASTES. There are four castes, the priestly, warrior and merchant class and the one that serves the other three.

CHABANYA. A Sage who entertained Shatrughna in his hermitage.

CHAITRARATHA. The King of the Gandharvas.

CHAITRARATHA GARDENS. The Celestial Gardens belonging to the God Kuvera.

CHAITYA. A tombstone, column, monument or sacrificial pile.

CHAKRACHARAS. Designation of a class of Beings ; the name means ' Moving in a circle '.

CHAKRATUNDA. A fish resembling a wheel.

CHAKRAVAKA. A Brahmany Duck or Ruddy Goose.

CHAMARA. A Chowrie or fan made of Yaks tails, an insignia of royality.

CHANDALA. An outcaste.

CHANDARI. A female titan.

CHANDAS. A sacred hymn or verse distinct from those in the Vedas.

CHANDRA. The Moon.

CHANDRACHRITAS. A country explored by the monkeys when they were searching for Sita.

CHANDRAHASA. A glittering scimitar, Ravana's sword, which he received from Shiva as a boon. The name means ' Deriding or shaming the moon '.

CHANDRAKANTA. The city ruled over by the son of Lakshmana.

CHARANAS. The Panegyrists of the Gods.

CHARAVAT. A mountain in the ocean where Vishvakarma forged the discus used by Vishnu.

CHARYAGOPURA. The mountain where Kumbhakarna slept.
CHATAK BIRD. ' Cuculus Melanoleucus ', a bird that according to legend lives only on rain-drops.
CHATURANGA. An army consisting of foot soldiers, cavalry, elephants and chariots.
CHITRA. The Planet Spica.
The month Chitra or Chaitra which is part of February and March.
CHITTRAKUTA. A sacred mountain where Rama and Sita dwelt in exile and is to this day considered a holy retreat.
CHYAVANA. A Sage, the son of the Rishi Bhrigu.

D

DADHIMUKHA. A monkey who guarded a grove and was ill-treated by Angada's victorious troops.
DAITYAS. Giants, titans or demons.
DAKSHA. One of Brahma's sons, whose daughter Uma became the consort of Shiva.
DAKSHAYANI. A female demon named Surasa also.
DAKSHINA. Traditional offering made after a sacred ceremony.
DAMSHTRA. A titan warrior.
DANAVAS. A race of Giants who were enemies of the Gods.
DANDA. A staff or rod.
The name of Sumali's son whose story is told in ' Uttara kanda. '
DANDADHARA. ' Bearer of the Rod ', a name of Death as Bearer of the Rod of Punishment.
DANDAKA. The name of a vast forest lying between the Rivers Godavari and Narmada, the scene of Rama and Sita's exile.
DANDI. One of the Sun-god's doorkeepers.
DANSHIRA. A titan.
DANTAVAKRA. One of Rama's courtiers.
DANU. A name of the Demon Kabandha q.v.
One of Bali's forbears.
DARDURA. A mountain in the south, sometimes associated with Mount Malaya.
DARIMUKHA. A monkey warrior.
DARMAPALA. One of Rama's ministers.
DARSHA. Bi-monthly sacrifice performed at the changes of the moon by those maintaining a perpetual fire.
DASARATHA. King of Koshala and father of Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna.
DASHAGRIVA. ' Ten-necked One ', a title given to Ravana.
DASHANANA. ' Ten-faced One ', a title given to Ravana.

DASYUS. Robbers.
DATYUHA or DATYUHAKA. A small Gallinule resembling a cuckoo.
DEVALOKA. The Celestial Region or the Abode of the Gods.
DEVANTAKA. ' Slayer of the Gods ', the title of a titan warrior.
DEVARISHI. See under Rishi.
DEVAS. The Gods or Shining Ones.
DEVASAKHA. A mountain that was called the ' Refuge of the Gods '.
DEVAVATI. The daughter of the Gandharva Gramani who became the consort of Shiva.
DEVAYANI. The wife of Nahusha.
DEVI. A title given to Parvati, the consort of Shiva.
DHANADA. A name of Kuvera meaning ' Granter of Wealth '.
DHANANJAYA. A title meaning ' Victorious in Battle ', used for the Moon-god, Fire-god and others.
DHANESHWARA. ' Lord of Wealth ', a title given to Kuvera.
DHANURVEDA. The Veda of Archery.
DHANYAMALINI. The mother of Atikaya.
DHARA. One of the wives of the Sage Kashyapa.
DHARANI. The Goddess of the Earth personified as the wife of Dhruva q.v.
DHARMA. Righteousness or duty, the traditionally ordained course of conduct; one of the four ends of life which are Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha—duty, prosperity, legitimate pleasure and liberation. Dharma is personfied as one of the Prajapatis, the God of Moral Law and Spiritual Duty.
DHARMABRIT. A Sage whom Rama encountered near the ' Lake of the Five Nymphs.'
DHARMAPALA. One of Rama's counsellors.
DHARMARAJA. A title of Yama as God of Justice.
DHATAR or DHATRI. ' Creator ', ' Author ', ' Founder ', a name given to Brahma, Vishnu and others.
DHAUMYA. A Sage.
DHRISHTI. One of the chief counsellors at the court of King Dasaratha.
DHRUVA. The Deity of the Pole-star whose story is told in the Vishnu Purana.
DHUMA. The God of Smoke.
DHUMAKETU. A meteor, comet or falling star.
The personified descending node.
A titan.
DHUMRA. Lord of all the Bears, an ally of Rama.
DHUMRAKSHA. A titan warrior.
DHUNDHUMARA. A title given to the King Kuvalashwa meaning ' Slayer of the Demon Dhundu '.
DHURJAT. A title meaning ' Having matted locks '.
DHWAJAGRIVA. A titan.
DILIPA. The father of the Sage Bharadwaja.

DINDIMA. A musical instrument.
DIRGHATMAS. A Sage.
DIRGHAYUS. A Sage.
DITI. The daughter of Daksha and wife of Kashyapa; she became the mother of the Daityas.
DIVAKARA. 'Bringer of Day', a title of the Sun.
DRONA. A measure approximating to ninety-two pounds.
DRUMAKULYA. A sacred spot spoken of by the Lord of the Waters on which Rama was told to loose his destructive weapon.
DUKULA. Woven silk or very fine cloth made of the inner bark of the plant of the same name.
DUNDUBHI. A Son of Maya, a giant who fought with Bali, the King of the Monkeys.
A kettledrum.
DURDHARSHA. A title given to Ravana meaning 'Dreadful', 'Unapproachable' or 'Unassailable'.
DURGAPURA. Yadu's city.
DURMUKHA. A monkey warrior.
DURMUKHI. A female titan.
DURVASA. A Sage.
DUSHANTA. A General in Khara's army who was slain by Rama.
DUSHKANTA. A king who yielded to Ravana without fighting.
DVIJIHVA. A titan warrior.
DVIVIDA. A monkey warrior.
DYUMATSENA. Prince of S'abra and father of Satyavanta.

EIGHTFOLD INTELLIGENCE. This includes the quality of accepting the truth and what is right, cherishing it, remembering it, propagating it and the knowledge of the ultimate essence.
EKAJATA. A female titan.
EKAKSHIPINGALA. 'One-eyed', a title given to Kuvera.
EKASHALYA. An aquatic creature; the word means 'having a tip or point' possibly a swordfish.

FIVE ASPECTS. The consideration of (a) time, (b) place, (c) persons and things concerned, (d) provision against mischance, (e) of the possibility of success.
FOUR POWERS. Physical power, mental power, power of resource and the power of making friends.
FOURFOLD DEFENCES. Defence by water, mountain, forest or by artificial means.

FOURTEEN QUALITIES. Knowledge of time and place, endurance, empirical knowledge, skill, physical strength, power of concealing one's counsel, the honouring of obligations and promises, heroism, appreciation of the enemy's strength and one's own relation to it, gratitude and beneficence to one's dependents or suppliants, non-acceptance of insult, freedom from uncontrolled movements (poise).

GADGADA. The father of Jambavan.

GADHI. The father of the Sage Vishvamitra and the son of King Kushanabha, hence the patronymic 'Kaushika'.
A king who yielded to Ravana without fighting.

GAJA. A monkey leader.

GALAVA. A Sage who prevented Ravana and King Mandhata from using the great destructive weapon and reconciling them.

GANDHAMADANA. A general in the monkey army who was wounded by Indrajita.
A mountain of fragrant forests to the east of Mount Meru, sometimes called the 'Mountain of Intoxicating Fragrance'.

GANDHARA. A region where the cities that were ruled over by the sons of Bharata were established, now Afghanistan.

GANDHARVAS. Celestial musicians.

GANGES or GANGA or GUNGA. The sacred river Ganges known under many other names such as :—
Bhagirathi—after the Sage Bhagiratha.
Harasekhara—the Crest of Shiva.
Khapaga—Three-way flowing.
Mandakini—Gently-flowing.
Jahnavi after the Sage Jahnu and so on.

GANHDARVI. The wife of Kashyapa and mother of horses.

GARGYA or GARGA. A great Sage who is mentioned in the Upanishads.

GARHAPATYA. A perpetual sacred fire maintained by a householder who has received it from his father and passed it on to his descendants. See also 'Three Fires.'

GARUDA. King of the Birds, the vehicle of Vishnu and the destroyer of serpents, sometimes portrayed as an eagle or jay with a human head.

GAUTAMA. A great Sage, the husband of Ahalya.

GAVAKSHA. A monkey leader, King of the Golangulas.

GAVASTHANA. 'Ray-furnished' or 'Having the merit of Auspiciousness', a title given to the Sun-god.

GAVAYA. A monkey warrior.

GAYA. A king who yielded to Ravana without fighting.
A monkey warrior.

GAYATRI. The most sacred prayer of the Rig-veda which is personified as a Goddess and considered to be the consort of Brahma and mother of the four Vedas.

GEYA. A monkey leader.

GHANAVRISHTI. 'He from whom floweth the fruit of acts', or 'He from whom cometh the showers', a name given to Indra.

GHATODARA. A titan warrior.

GHORA. A titan.

GHRITACHI. A nymph, the wife of Kushanabha and mother of a hundred daughters.

GO. A leader of Varuna's troops.

GODAVARI. A river close to the Dandaka Forest.

GODHA. A piece of leather or metal worn on the left arm to protect it from the bow-string.

GOHA. Soft leather, possible cow or doe-skin.

GOKARNA. A hermitage.

GOLANGULA. A black monkey that has a tail like a cow; also called Gopuccha.

GOLOBHA. A giant.

GOMEDHA. The Cow-sacrifice.

GOMUKHA. The son of Matali and the charioteer of Jayanta.

GOPRATARA. 'A Ford for Cattle', a place of pilgrimage near the River Sarayu.

GOSAVA. The sacrifice of a cow lasting a day.

GRAHA. An inauspicious planet such as Mars, Saturn, Rahu and Ketu.

GRAHAMALA. A cluster or group of inauspicious planets.

GRAMANI. The leader of an army or chief of a village or community.
A Gandharva who gave his daughter, Devavati, to Sukesha in marriage.

GRANDSIRE OF THE WORLD. A title given to Brahma, the Creator.

GRIDHRAS. Birds of prey.

GRIHI. One who, having completed his education, marries and becomes a householder. See Grihasta.

GUHA. King of the Nishadas, a mountain tribe; he was a great devotee of Rama.

GUHYAKAS. Hidden Beings who were attendants of Kuvera.

GULMA. A body of troops consisting of nine platoons, nine elephants, twenty-seven horses and forty-five foot soldiers.

GUNAS. 'Guna' literally means a thread or strand but is also used for quality, attribute or property; for instance, air has tangibility and sound as its 'guna'.
According to the Sankhya Philosophy, nature consists of an equipoise of the three 'gunas', tamas, rajas and sattwa or darkness and inertia, passion-struggle and finally goodness; these 'gunas' are the characteristics of all created things.

GURU. A traditional Teacher of the spiritual science, one who dispels ignorance.

H

HAHA. A Gandharva.

HALA. 'Ugliness' from which 'Halya' meaning 'Ugly' is derived. See the story of Ahalya.

HAMSA. A swan, heron or flamingo.

HANUMAN or HANUMAT. A monkey who was Sugriva's minister and friend and a great devotee of Rama. He was the son of Pavana, the Wind-god and the Nymph Anjana. The name actually means 'He of the fractured jaw'.

HARA. A name of Shiva.
A son of Mali.
A monkey warrior.

HARA-HARI. The name of Shiva and Vishnu conjoined.

HARIDASHVA. A name of the Sun-god and of Indra.

HARIDIKYA. An Asura.

HARI. The name of the Lord Vishnu meaning 'Captivating', 'Pleasing'.

HARIHAYA. 'Having bay horses', a title given to Indra.

HARIJATA. A female titan.

HARILOMAN. A monkey warrior.

HARITANEMI. A Daitya.

HARITAS. The people born of the Cow Shabala.

HARIVAHANNA. The name of Garuda.
The abode of Indra.

HASTA. A star identified as Corvus.

HASTIMUKHA. A titan.

HASTINAPURA. A city on the Ganges.

HAVIS. A sacred draught or anything offered as an oblation with fire, clarified butter or ghee.

HAVISHPANDA. The son of Vishvamitra.

HAWAN. A particular offering to the Gods in an ancient Fire-ceremony.

HAYAGRIVA. 'Horse-necked', according to one legend, Vishnu himself assumed this form to recover the Vedas which had been stolen by two Daityas, Madhu and Kaitabha.

HAYANANA. The 'Place of the Horse-necked One'.

HEMA. A nymph who was the consort of Maya, the great magician.
A kind of gold.

HEMACHANDRA. A son of Vishala and father of Suchandra.

HEMAKUTA. A mountain.
A monkey leader, the son of Varuna.

HETI. Heti and Praheti were titans or Daityas born from the waters at the time of creation.

HIMAPANDURA. One of the elephants of the four quarters who support the earth.

HIMAVAT. 'The Abode of Snows', the Himalayas.
King of the Himalayas.

HIRANYAGARBHA. The name of Brahma as having been born from the golden Egg, a manifestation of the Supreme Soul.
HIRANYA-KASHIPU. 'Clothed in Gold', a title given to a Daitya who obtained the sovereignty of the Three Worlds from Shiva for a million years and who persecuted his son Prahlada who was a devotee of Vishnu.
HIRANYARETAS. 'Having golden seed', a name of Agni and the Sun.
HOMA. The Homa Sacrifice is the act of making an oblation to the Gods by pouring butter into the fire to the accompaniment of prayers and invocations. It is regarded as one of the five great Sacrifices called Deva-yajnas.
HRADINI. A titan.
HRASVAKARNA. A titan.
HRASVAROMAN. The father of Janaka.
HRISHIKESHA. A name of Vishnu meaning 'Lord of the Organs of Sense'.
HUHU. A Gandharva.
HUTASENA. 'Eater of the Sacrificial Offerings', a name given to the God of Fire, Agni.

I

IKSHUMATI. A river.
IKSHVAKU. The son of Manu, founder of the Solar Race of Kings who ruled over Ayodhya.
ILA. The name of King Kardama when he had been transformed into a woman.
ILVALA. A demon subdued by the Sage Agastya.
INDRA. The King of the Gods who is known under other names such as :—
Mahendra—Great God.
Shatakratu—He of a Hundred Sacrifices.
Purandara—Destroyer of Cities.
Vajrapani—He of the Thunderbolt Hand.
Lord of Sachi, (Sachi being his consort).
Maghavan—Possessor of Wealth, and other titles.
INDRAJANU. A monkey general.
INDRAJITA. The son of Ravana, also called Ravani and Indrashatru.
INDRALOKA. Indra's abode, the Celestial Realm.
INDRA'S BOW. The rainbow.
INDRASHATRU. See Indrajita.
INDRAYANU. A monkey leader.
INDU. A Constellation.
A name used for the Moon and the Planet Mercury.

IRAVAT. A title meaning ' Granter of Enjoyment or Refreshment '. The name of one of the great Serpents.

IRAVATI. The mother of the elephant Airavata q.v.

ISHANA. ' Ruler ', ' Master ', a name of Shiva.

ITHASA. Legend or tradition, history or traditional account of former events.

J

JABALI or JAVALI. A brahmin at King Dasaratha's court.

JAGANATHA. ' Lord of the World ', a title given to Vishnu, Rama and Dattatreya.

JAGARI. Coarse brown sugar made of Palm sap.

JAHNAVI. A name given to the sacred River Ganges.

JAHNU. The Sage who drank up the sacred River Ganges.

JALADA. A sea that was considered a source of terror to all beings into which the Rishi Aurva had cast his anger.

JAMBAVAN or JAMBAVAT. The King of the Bears, one of Rama's allies.

JAMBHA. A demon slain by Indra.

JAMBHUMALI. A titan.

JAMBU. A fabulous river, said to flow from Mount Meru from the sap of a giant Jambu Tree, which was supposed to be a landmark similar to the Pole-star.

JAMBUDWIPA. One of the seven continents of which the world was said to be composed.

JAMBUNADI. Gold taken from the River Jambu.

JANAKA. King of Mithila and father of Sita.

JANARDANA. ' Exciter or Agitator of Men ', a name given to Vishnu.

JANASTHANA. The colony of titans in the Dandaka Forest. The name means ' Resort of Demons '.

JANGHA. A titan.

JAPA. The silent repetition of a prayer or sacred formula.

JATAPURA. A city, searched by the monkeys for Sita.

JATARUPA. Gold in its original purity.

JATARUPASHILA. North of the Svadu Sea is this mountain of the splendour of gold where Ananta sleeps.

JATAYU. The King of the Vultures who attempted to prevent Ravana carrying off Sita and was slain by him.

JATI. One of the great Serpents.

JAVA. The father of the Demon Viradha.

JAYA. A Goddess, the producer of weapons; she was the daughter of Daksha.

JAYANTA. One of King Dasaratha's ministers.

Indra's son, who entered into a duel with Indrajita and was saved by being borne away by his maternal Grandsire.

JISHNU. A title meaning 'Victorious', 'Triumphant' given to Vishnu.

JUTA. The matted locks of a devotee.

JYOTIRMUKHA. A monkey warrior.

JYOTISHOMA. A sacred ceremony, really the Soma Ceremony with either four or seven sub-divisions.

K

KABANDHA. An Asura or demon who was slain by Rama.

KADAMVARI. Natural wines which require no preparation.

KADRU. A daughter of Daksha who became the wife of the Rishi Kashyapa and the mother of the many-headed Serpents including Shesha and Vasuki.

KAHOLA. The father of the Sage Ashtavakra, who cursed his son while he was in the womb causing him to be born with eight humps.

KAIKASI. The consort of Vishravas and mother of Ravana, Kumbhakarna, Bibishana, Shurpanakha and other Rakshasas.

KAIKEYA. The kingdom ruled over by King Kaikeya who was the father of Kaikeyi.

KAIKEYI. The favourite consort of King Dasaratha and mother of Bharata.

KAILASHA. A sacred mountain which was said to be the abode of Shiva.

KAITABHA. A Daitya slain by Vishnu.

KAKUTSTHA. A title used for the descendants of Kakutstha in the House of Ikshvaku, also for Puranjaya, a Prince of the Solar Race whose story is told in Vishnu Purana. The word comes from 'Kakud' an emblem of royalty and 'Stha' meaning a prince or grandson of Ikshvaku.

KALA. Time and sometimes Time as Death.
The daughter of Bibishana.
A mountain searched by the monkeys for Sita and Ravana.

KALAGURU. Aloes or Agallochum, a species of Sandal.

KALAHAMSA. Gallinule Porphyria, a species of duck or goose.

KALAKA. The wife of the Rishi Kashyapa and mother of the Danavas.
The daughter of Kashyapa and Kalaka.

KALAKEYAS. Giants or Danavas born of Kalaka.

KALAMAHI. A river.

KALANEMI. An Asura, the enemy of the Gods.

KALAPAS. A string of pearls or a band woven of pearls or small bells.

KALA'S WHEEL. The 'Wheel of Time.'

KALIKAMUKHA. A son of Mali.

KALINDI. The wife of King Asit, mother of Sagara.
A river.

KALIYA. One of Rama's courtiers.

KALMASHAPADA. The name of King Saudasa, whose story is told in Uttarakanda.

KALMASHI. A titan, demon or goblin.
Animals that are spotted or of a variegated colour.

KALPA. A Day, and Night of Brahma, a thousand Yugas. A tree of Paradise.

KAMA. The Indian Cupid or God of Love, also called by other names.
See also under Artha.

KAMADHUK. The wish-fulfilling cow which belonged to the Sage Vasishtha.

KAMPANA. A titan.

KAMPILYA. The city ruled over by Brahmadatta.

KAMVALA. A woollen cloth or upper garment.

KANAKA. A kind of gold.

KANAKHALA. A mountain.

KANCANA. A kind of gold.
A Sage in the line of Bhrigu.

KANCHANA. Shatrughna's family priest.

KANDA. A monkey warrior.

KANDARPA. Another name of the God of Love.

KANDU. A Rishi who cursed a forest.

KANSA. A forbear of Bali.

KANVA. A great Rishi, the son of Medhatithi, the father of Kandu.

KAPALASHIRAS. A Sage.

KAPARDIN. 'Wearing a Kaparda', a special knot of hair; a name given to Shiva.

KAPATHA. A titan.

KAPI. A monkey.

KAPILA. A great Sage, founder of the Sankhya System of Philosophy, who was said to be an incarnation of Vishnu. He destroyed the sons of Sagara whose story is told in Balakanda.

KAPIVATI. A river.

KARALA. A titan, one of those whose dwelling was burnt down by Hanuman.

KARANDA or KARANDAVA. A species of duck.

KARAVIRAKSHA. A titan.

KARDAMA. The son of Prajapati, a Sage.

KARDAMEYA. The son of Kardama, see under Ila.

KARENU. An elephant.

KARKA. The Sign of Cancer.

KARKOTAKA. The name of a great Serpent.

KARKUTAKA. The name of a city.

KARMA. The law governing the behaviour of matter in all its gross and subtle forms in accord with the divine purpose.
KARTAR. The Sun.
KARTASVARA. A kind of gold.
KARTAVIRYA. A title of Arjuna, the King of the Haihayas.
KARTIKA. October, when the sun enters Libra.
KARTTIKEYA. The God of War who is also called Skanda and Mahasena. He was the son of Shiva.
KARUSHAS. A people.
KASHI. The modern Benares, a sacred city. The King of Kashi was Rama's ally.
KASHIKOSHALAS. A region explored by the monkeys for Sita.
KASHYA. An ascetic.
KASHYAPA. The great Vedic Sage, grandson of Brahma, who was the father of Vivasvata.
KATYAYANA. A Sage and Writer of great celebrity, the author of Dharmashastra.
KAUPIN. A loin cloth.
KAUSHALYA. Dasaratha's chief queen and the mother of Rama.
KAUSHEYA. A Rishi.
KAUSHIKA. A title of Vishvamitra after his grandfather.
The name of a devotee who went to hell for having pointed out a road to robbers by which they pursued and killed some persons who were fleeing from them.
KAUSHIKI. The sister of Vishvamitra who became a river.
KAUSTUBHA. The celebrated jewel that was churned from the ocean and later adorned the breast of Vishnu.
KAVANDHAS. Headless spirits or ghosts.
KAVASHIN. A Sage.
KAVERI. A river, the resort of Apsaras.
KAVYAHANAS. A class of Celestial Beings.
KESARIN. The father of Hanuman, a monkey warrior.
KESHINI. A river.
KESHNI. King Sagara's chief queen.
KETUMATI. The consort of Sumali.
KEYURA. A bracelet worn on the upper arm.
KHAGA. ' Coursing in the highest heaven ', a title of the sun.
KHARA. A titan, the brother of Ravana, who was slain by Rama.
KHIVA or KHEEVA. Frumenty; hulled wheat boiled in milk and sweetened.
KILA-KILA. The monkeys' cry.
KIMPURUSHAS. Beings, half human, half animal, sometimes identified with the Kinneras.
KINKARAS. Titans sent out by Ravana to capture Hanuman after he had destroyed the Ashoka Grove.
KINKINI. A small bell or woven band of small bells.

KINNERAS. Celestial Beings with horses heads who attend on the God Kuvera.

KIRATAS. A race of hunters.

KIRTI. A celestial nymph personifying fame and glory.

KISHKINDHA. The country ruled over by Bali, possibly Mysore; this kingdom was handed on to Sugriva by Rama.

KNOWER OF SELF. A knower of Truth or Reality—an illumined being.

KOSHALA. The kingdom ruled over by King Dasaratha.

KOTI. Ten millions.

KOYASHTIKA. A lapwing.

KRATHANA. A monkey warrior.

KRATU. A great Sage, one of the seven immortal Sages, Regents of the stars of the constellation of the Plough.

KRATUDHAMA. 'Protector of sacrifices', a title of Vishnu.

KRAUNCHA. A species of heron, Ardea Jaculator.
A mountain.

KRAUNCHACHARYA. A Sage.

KRAUNCHARANYA. A forest.

KRAUNCHAVATA. A mountain.

KRAUNCHI. A daughter of Kashyapa and Tamra; she became the mother of owls and birds of prey.

KRIKARA. A partridge.

KRISHNAGIRI. A mountain.

KRISHNAVARTMAN. Father of Krathana, a monkey leader.

KRISHNAVENI. A river.

KRITANTA. Destiny, fate or death. The name means 'Bringer to an end'.

KRITAYUGA. The Golden Age.

KRITTIKAS. The Pleiades, nurses of the God of War, Karttikeya.

KRODHAVASHA. One of the wives of Kashyapa.

KROSHA. A distance equal to the distance the voice carries.

KSHARANADI. The Kshara River, said to be in hell, its waters are corrosive.

KSHATRAVEDA. A treatise in the Veda relating to a warrior's duties.

KSHATRIYAS. Those of the warrior class.

KSHIRODHA. The ocean of milk.

KSHUPA. The name of one of the kings of the Ikshvaku Race; the word means a bush or shrub, lit.: 'having roots'.

KSHURADHARA. A sharp razor-like instrument.

KUKSHI. Son of Ikshvaku, the father of Vikukshi.
A region explored by the monkeys in search of Sita.

KULA. One of Rama's courtiers.

KULINGA. A city.
A river.
A bird.

KUMBHA. A titan, a son of Kumbhakarna.

KUMBHAHANU. One of Prahasta's companions.
KUMBHAKARNA. The brother of Ravana, a monster slain by Rama.
KUMBHAYONI. A name given to the Sage Agastya referring to his birth in a jar.
KUMBHINASI. The consort of Madhu.
KUMUDA. A monkey leader.
One of the elephants of the four quarters.
KUNJARA. The father of Anjana and maternal grandfather of Hanuman.
The place where Vishvakarma constructed an abode for Agastya.
KURARI. An osprey.
KURUS. A tribe.
A forest.
KUSHA. One of the sons of Rama and Sita.
KUSHADVAJA. The brother of Janaka and father of the wives of Shatrughna and Bharata.
KUSHAMBHA. The son of Kusha and grandson of Brahma.
KUSHANABHA. The son of Kusha and brother of Kushambha; his daughters married Brahmadatta.
KUSHAPARVA. A monkey, the son of Vivasvata.
KUSHASHVA. The son of Sahadeva and father of Somadatta.
KUSHAVATI. The city built by Rama for his son Kusha.
KUSHIKAS. The descendants of Kusha.
KUTIKA. A river.
KUTIKOSHTIKA. A river.
KUTSA. An ascetic.

LAGNA KARKA. The sign of Cancer.
LAGNA MEENA. The sign of Pisces.
LAGNAS. The twelve signs of the Zodiac are considered as rising above the horizon in the course of the day. The Lagna has the name of the sign, its duration is from the first rising of the sign till the whole is above the horizon. Lagna literally means the point where the horizon and the path of the planet meet.
LAKSHMANA. The son of King Dasaratha and Queen Sumitra and the favourite brother of Rama, who accompanied him in his exile. Lakshmana was said to be the incarnation of the Serpent Shesha who upholds the world, and also an aspect of Vishnu.
LAMBA. A mountain.
LANKA. The kingdom ruled over by Ravana, King of the Titans, or what is now Ceylon.
LAVA. The son of Rama and Sita.
LAVANA. The son of Madhu and Kumbhinasi who was slain by Shatrughna.

LAYAS. Time in regard to music, quick, moderate, slow.
LOHITANGA. The Planet Mars.
LOKAPALAS. The Guardians of the four quarters who were Gods.
LOKASHAMBHU. ' Creator of Joy ', ' Bringer of Happiness ', a title given to Brahma or Shiva.
LOLA. A Danava, the father of Madhu.
LOMAPADA OR RAMAPADA. A king whose story is told in Balakanda.
LOMASA. A titan.
LOPADMUDRA. The wife of the Sage Agastya.
LOSHTA. A vessel of coconut or metal used for begging and ceremonial purposes.

M

MADA. The temporal juices of an elephant in rut.
The frenzy of intoxication.
MADANA. The God of Love, Kama or Kandarpa.
MADAYANTI. The wife of King Saudasa.
MADGU or MADGUKA. Water-fowl.
MADHA. Spiritous liquor made of honey and molasses and the blossom of Bassia Latifolia.
MADHAVA. A name of Vishnu.
MADHAVI. A name of the earth meaning ' Vernal Beauty ' or ' Drinker of Soma '.
MADHU. A demon, slain by Vishnu
MADHUCCHANDA. Vishvamitra's son who was cursed by his father for disobedience.
MADHUMANTA. A city founded by Danda.
MADHUMATTA. One of Rama's courtiers.
MADHUPARKA. A mixture of curds, butter, honey and the milk of coconut, a traditional offering.,
MADHUPURA. The city of Madhu taken by Ravana.
MADHUSHPANDA. A son of Vishvamitra.
MADHUSUDANA. A name of Vishnu meaning the ' Destroyer of Madhu '.
MADHUVANA. The wood devastated by the monkeys.
MADHYA. A number equal to ten Arbudas.
MAGADHA. A kingdom, now South Bihar.
MAGADHAS. The people of Magadha.
The country of the Magadhas.
Panegyrists.
MAGDHA-PHALGUNI. The season from the middle of January to the middle of March.
MAGHAVAN. A title of the God Indra.
MAHADAMSHTRA. A titan who fought against the Gods.
MAHADEVA. ' Great God ', a title of Shiva.

MAHAKAYA. A titan warrior.

MAHANADA. 'Loud-throated', the name of a titan warrior.

MAHAPADMA. One of the elephants supporting the four quarters.

MAHAPARSHWA. 'Mighty-flanked', a titan warrior.

MAHAPRASTHANA. Death, the word means 'Setting out on the great journey' or 'Departure from life'.

MAHARADA. A titan warrior.

MAHARAKSHA. A titan, the son of Khara.

MAHARATHA. A son of Vishvamitra.

MAHARATHAS. Car-warriors, those who can take on ten thousand archers single-handed.

MAHARATHRAS. Great warriors.

MAHARSHIS. Great Rishis, also spelt Maharishis.

MAHARUNA. A mountain.

MAHASENA. The God of War, Skanda or Karttikeya.

MAHASHALA or MAHASHAILA. A mountain where the sun was said to rise.

MAHAT. Cosmic Intellect.

MAHATEJAS. 'Of great energy or lustre', a title.

MAHATMA. 'Great soul', a title given to a Rishi or Sage.

MAHAVANA. Great forest.

MAHENDRA. A name of Indra.

A mountain in the centre of the sea visited by Indra at the time of the new moon.

MAHESHWARA. A name of Shiva.

MAHI. The Earth Goddess.

MAHIMATI. The city ruled over by Arjuna, King of the Haihayas.

MAHISHA. A 'Great or powerful animal', a name given to Dundubhi, the buffalo slain by Bali.

MAHISHMATI. A city ruled over by the God of Fire.

MAHODARA. The name of a son of Vishvamitra.

A general in Ravana's army. The name means 'Huge-bellied'.

MAHODAYA. An ascetic who was transformed into one of the lowest caste by Vishvamitra's curse. The mountain where the sacred herbs that revived Lakshmana grew.

MAINA. A small percher about the size of a swallow which can be taught to repeat words. Also called Mina or Mynah.

MAINAKA. A golden mountain north of Kailasha.

A nymph who tempted Vishvamitra.

MAINDA. A monkey leader.

MAIREYA or MIREYA. Liquor extracted from the blossom of 'Lythrum Fructicosum'.

MAITHILA or MITHILA. The capital of Videha, a kingdom ruled over by King Janaka.

MAITHILI. A name of Sita as daughter of the King of Mithila.

MAITRA. The period of early morning.

MAKARA. A kind of sea-monster, sometimes confounded with a shark, crocodile or dolphin.

MALAVANA. A country.

MALAYA. A mountain on the summit of which Agastya dwelt.

MALI. One of the sons of Sukesha.

MALYAVAN or MALYAVAT. Ravana's father-in-law, the brother of Sumali and father of Mandodari.

MANASA or MANASAROVA. A lake on Mt. Kailasha, said to be hollowed out of the mind of Brahma. The name means 'Lake of the Mind'; it is still considered a sacred place.

MANDAKINI. A river near Mount Chittrakuta.

A treeless mountain where Kama practised austerities.

MANDALA. A circle.

MANDARA. A mountain used in the churning of the ocean by the Gods and Asuras.

MANDARKANI. A Sage.

MANDAVI. Bharata's wife, the daughter of King Kushadwaja.

MANDEHAS. Terrible demons that hung suspended from rocks in Garuda's abode.

MANDHATA or MANDHATRI. A king of the race of Ikshvaku, the son of Yuvaneshwa.

MANDODARI. Ravana's consort and the mother of Indrajita.

MANGALA. A monkey warrior.

MANIBADRA. One of Kuvera's warriors who was slain by Prahasta.

MANIBHADRA. A Yaksha defeated by Dashagriva; see under Parshva-Mauli.

MANKUKA. A musical instrument.

MANMATHA. A name of Kama, the God of Love.

MANTHARA. The hunch-backed maid of Kaikeyi, who inspired her mistress to exact the fulfilment of the boons King Dasaratha had conferred on her.

MANTRA. A sacred formula.

MANTRAPALA. A minister of Dasaratha's court.

MANU. The first man, who was given the holy truth by his father Vivasvata. See Bhagavadgita Ch. IV, opening verses.

MARICHA. A demon who, disguised as a deer, lured Rama from his hermitage, thus leaving Sita alone and allowing Ravana to bear her away.

MARICHAS. Offspring of the Ascetic Maricha.

MARICHIMAN. 'Having rays', a title given to the Sun.

MARKANDEYA. A Sage who was remarkable for his austerities. A Purana is named after him.

MARTANDA. A name of the Sun.

MARTANDAKA. 'He who infuses life into the Mundane Egg', a name of the Lord.

MARU. A desert that arose from a rift made by Rama's arrows in Drumakulya.

MARUKANTARA. The place on which Rama loosed an arrow on the request of the Ocean.
MARUTAS. Lords of the Tempest.
MARUTI. A name of Hanuman as son of Maruta, the Wind-god.
MARUTTA. A king who encountered Ravana while sacrificing to the Gods.
A Sage, disciple of Samvarta. Marutta officiated at the Ashvamedha Sacrifice for King Ila.
MASHAS. A class of Sage or Hermit.
A measure.
MATALI. Indra's charioteer.
MATANGA. A Sage.
A forest or wood.
MATANGAS. Elephants.
MATARISHVAN. An aerial Being mentioned in the Rig-Veda as bringing down fire to earth.
MATHURA. A sacred city.
MATTA. A titan warrior.
MAUDGALYA. A Sage.
MAYA. The deluding power of the Lord by which the universe has come into existence and appears as real.
The son of Diti, a giant who created a magical cave for the Nymph Hema, his consort. Maya was the artificer of the Gods.
MAYAVI. A giant slain by Bali.
MEDINI. A name of the earth on account of it having been covered by the marrow of Madhu and Kaitabha after they had been slain by Vishnu.
MEGHA. The Regent of the clouds.
MEGHANADA. A name of Indrajita meaning 'The Roar of a thunder-cloud'.
MEGHAS. Musical instruments.
One of the 'ragas' or musical scales.
MEKHALA. An ornament worn round the waist.
MERU. A sacred mountain said to be the abode of Celestial Beings.
MERUSAVARNI. A great ascetic.
MITRAGHNA. A titan warrior slain by Rama.
MITRASAHA. The son of King Saudasa, a king of the Raghu Race.
MLECCHAS. Foreigners, barbarians, eaters of flesh; a people said to have been born of the sacred cow Shabala for her protection.
MODAKA. A kind of sweetmeat.
MODAKARA. A Sage.
MONKEYS. Sometimes called Vanaras or Forest Dwellers or Deer of the Trees, etc. See also Viharas, Valimukhas.
MRIDANGA. A kind of drum.
MRIDU. One of Bali's fortresses.
The Planet Saturn.
A Danava.

MRIGI. The daughter of Krodavasha, the mother of elephants.
MRITASAMJIVANI. See under FLOWERS and TREES GLOSSARY.
MRITYU. The God of Death, another name of Yama, meaning 'Bringer of Death'.
MUDITAS. A class of servants.
MUHURTA. An instant, a moment, an hour according to the context.
MUNDI. 'Shaven' or 'bald'.
MUNI. A holy Sage, a pious or learned person, a title given to a holy man.
MURACHAPATTNA. A country.
MURAGA. A tambourine.
MUSHTIKAS. People cursed by Vishvamitra who subsequently assumed the lowest caste.

N

NABHAGA. The son of Yayati and father of Aja.
NAGABHOGAS. Sea-serpents.
NAGAS. Those of the Serpent Race.
NAHUSHA. The father of King Yayati. Nahusha's curious story is found in the Mahabharata and the Puranas.
NAIGAMAS. Interpreters of the Veda.
NAIMISHA WOOD. A wood so-called because Gauri-mukha destroyed the army of Asuras there in the 'twinkling of an eye', 'nai-misha' meaning 'twinkling'. It was in this wood that Rama celebrated the Ashvamedha Sacrifice.
NAIRRITA. The ruling star of the titans.
NAIRRITAS. A name given to the titans as offspring of Nairrita.
NAKIN. One dwelling in the sky or 'Naka', a divine being.
NAKSHATRA. The Hindus, in addition to the common division of the Zodiac into twelve signs, divided it into twenty-seven Nakshatras, two in each sign. Each Nakshatra has its appropriate name :—

1. Ashwini. 2. Bharani. 3. Krittika. 4. Rohini. 5. Mrgashiras. 6. Ardea. 7. Purnavasu. 8. Pushya. 9. Alesha. 10. Magna. 11. Purva Phalguni. 12. Uttara-Phalguni. 13. Hasta. 14. Chitra. 15. Svati. 16. Vishaka. 17. Anuradha. 18. Jyasatha. 19 Mula. 20. Purvashadha. 21. Uttarashraddha. 22. Abijit. 23. Shravana. 24. Shravishtha or Dhanishta. 25. Shatabhishaj. 26. Purva Bhadrapada. 27. Uttara Bhadrapada. 28. Revati.*.

* The last is used if Abijit is omitted.

NALA. A monkey chief, general in Sugriva's army.

NALAKUVERA. The son of Vaishravana who was wedded to Rambha and cursed Ravana for his assault on her.

NALINI. A river.

NAMUCHI. A demon slain by Indra by means of the foam on water.
A Sage.

NANDANA. The celestial Gardens of Indra.

NANDI. The sacred bull that is Shiva's vehicle and which symbolizes the Sattwa-guna.

NANDIGRAMA. The city from which Bharata ruled in Rama's absence.

NANDISHVARA. A Sage who cursed Ravana.

NARADA. A divine Sage who appeared to Valmiki and told him the history of Rama's life. See Balakanda.

NARAKA. Hell, of which Manu enumerates twenty divisions, some being the abode of serpents or demons. The seven best known are: Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Rasatala, Talatala, Mahatala and Patala.
The name of a demon slain by Indra.
A son of Kashyapa and Kalaka.

NARANTAKA. 'Destroyer of man', a son of Ravana.

NARAVAHANA. The King of Kailasha who was vanquished by Ravana.

NARAYANA. A name of Vishnu, so called because the waters (Nara) were his first place of motion.

NARMADA. A river.
A Gandharvi, whose daughters married Sumali, Mali and Malyavan.

NARTAKAS. Dancers, actors, bards, mummers or heralds.

NATAS. Dancers.

NATYUHA or NATYUHAKA. A small gallinule.

NIDHIS. The personified treasures of the God of Wealth.

NIKUMBHA. A titan, the son of Kumbhakarna.

NIKUMBHILA. A grove on the outskirts of Lanka.

NILA. A monkey chief, general in Sugriva's army.

NISHADAS. A mountain tribe dwelling in the Vindhya Range who lived by hunting.

NISHAKARA. An ascetic, friend of animals and of the vultures Sampati and Jatayu.

NISHKA. A gold piece or nugget, sometimes worn as an ornament.

NISHUMBHA. See Shumbha.

NIVATAKAVACHAS. A race of giants. The word means 'Whose armour is impenetrable'.

NIYUTA. A hundred thousand.

NRIGA. A king whose story is told in Uttarakanda.

NRISHANGU. A Sage.

NRISNGHA. An Incarnation of Vishnu as half-man, half-lion.

O

OM. See under Aum.

OMKARA. The sacred syllable 'OM' or 'AUM'.

OSHADHI-PRASTHA. The 'Place of medicinal herbs', a city in the Himalayas mentioned in the 'Kumara Sambhava' a poem, on the God of War by Kalidasa.

PADMA. A measurement, a thousand billions.
A Yaksha.
An elephant.
A lotus.

PADMACHALU WOODS. Woods where the monkeys sought Sita.

PADMANABHA. The 'Lotus-navelled One', a name of Vishnu.

PADMAPRABODHA. 'He who awakens the lotus', a title of the Sun.

PADMAVANA. 'The Lotus-forest', a celestial retreat.

PAHLAVAS. Warriors born of the sacred cow Shabala, for her protection. A name possibly given to the Persians.

PAKA. A demon slain by Indra.

PAKASHASANA. 'The Punisher of Paka', a title given to Indra.

PAKSHAJA. The moon.
Winged clouds.

PALVALA. A lake.

PAMPA. The lake by which Rama and Lakshmana rested in their exile.

PANASA or PANASHA. A monkey leader.
A titan who was one of Bibishana's counsellors.

PANCHAJANA. A Danava slain by Vishnu.

PANCHAJANYA. Vishnu's conch.

PANCHAPSARAS. The 'Lake of the Five Nymphs', created by the Sage Mandarkani.

PANCHARATRA. The name of the Vaishnava Sect.

PANCHAVATI. A district near the source of the Godavari River.

PANDU. A mountain.

PANNAGAS. Celestial Serpents, the offspring of Kadru.

PARADHA. A Samudra thirty times.

PARAGAS. Winged creatures.

PARAMARISHIS. Great or Supreme Rishis.

PARAMATMAN. The Absolute, Brahman.

PARANTAPA. A title meaning the 'Oppressor or Subduer of a foe'.

PARASURAMA. 'Rama with the Axe', the sixth Incarnation of Vishnu, as the son of Yamadagni and Renuka.

PARATPARA. A title meaning 'Greater than the Great'.

PARIHARYAS. Bracelets.

PARIPLAVA. A spoon used in sacrifices.

PARISHTARANIKA. A funeral couch or pyre.

PARIYATRA. One of the principal mountain ranges in India, said to rise from the sea.

PARJANYA. A Vedic Deity or Rain God. Sometimes used as a title for Indra.

PARSHVA-MAULI. 'One with his diadem awry', a name given to the Yaksha Manibhadra after being struck by Dashagriva in combat.

PARUSHA. A titan.

PARVAN. The period of the moon's change.

PARVATA. A Sage who cursed King Nriga.

PARVATI. Shiva's consort; also known under many other names such as :—

Devi, Girija, Kanya, Sati, Padma-Lanchana, Shiva-Duti, Uma and so on.

PASHPOTKALA. Son of Sumali and Ketumati.

PASHUPATI. 'Lord of Creatures', a title given to Shiva.

PATAHA. A war-drum.

PATALA. See under Naraka.

PATTIKAS. Plates of metal (usually copper) inscribed with royal edicts.

PAULASTYA. See Poulastya.

PAULOMA. The wife of Kashyapa and mother of the Danavas.

PAULOMI. The consort of Indra, also known as Sachi.

PAUNDARIKA. The Soma Sacrifice lasting twelve days.

PAURNAMASA. A sacrifice performed at the full moon.

PAVAKA. A name of Agni, the God of Fire.

PAVAKAKSHA. A monkey warrior.

PAVAKI. The 'Son of Fire', a name of Skanda, the God of War.

PAVANI. A river.

PAYASA. A preparation of rice and milk.

PHALGUNI. A Nakshatra q.v.

PHANA. A titan.

PINAKA. Shiva's sacred bow.

PINDA. A funeral cake or offering.

PINGAS. 'Tawny Ones', a name given to the monkey race.

PISACHAS. Ghosts or evil spirits.

PISHITAKASHANAS. Flesh-eating imps or goblins, a name also given to the titans.

PITRIS. Ancestors or Manes.

PLAVAGAS or PLAVAGAMAS. 'Those who move by leaps or bounds', the monkeys.

POULASTYA. One of the Seven Immortal Sages and the grandfather of Ravana.

PRABHA. The consort of the moon and sometimes said to be the personification of the light of the sun.

PRABHAKARA. A name of the sun.
PRABHAVA. A minister of Sugriva.
PRABHAVISHNU. A name of Vishnu.
PRABHOJYA. A monkey leader.
PRACANDA. 'The Fierce One', a name of the sun.
PRACETAS. The eleventh Prajapati, Guardian of the West.
The father of Valmiki.
A name given to Varuna and Agni.
PRADAKSHINA. A salutation which consists of circumambulating a person keeping him on the right hand.
PRAGHASA. A titan slain by Hanuman.
PRAHASA. One of Varuna's ministers.
PRAHASTA. A titan, the father of Jambumalin and Ravana's counsellor. He was the conqueror of Manibhadra and was later slain by Nila.
PRAHETI. A Daitya, see Heti.
PRAHRADA. A Daitya.
PRAJANGHA. A monkey warrior.
PRAJAPATI. 'Lord of Beings', a name given to Brahma and other Gods.
PRAJAPATIS. The sons of Brahma.
PRAJYOTISHA. A city.
PRALAMBA. A mountain.
PRALAYA. The time of dissolution of the world at the end of a world cycle.
PRAMATHA. A titan.
PRAMATHIN. A monkey renowned for his courage.
PRAMATI. One of Bibishana's ministers.
PRAMODANA. An ascetic.
PRAMUCHI. An ascetic.
PRANA. Vital air or breath.
PRANAYAMA. The Practice or Science of breath control.
PRANJALI. A gesture of respect, holding the hands slightly hollowed, side by side as if presenting an offering.
PRASABHA. A monkey warrior.
PRASENAJIT. The son of Susamdhi and brother at Dhruvasamdhi.
PRASRAVANA. A mountain.
PRATAPANA. A titan.
PRATARDANA. The King of Kashi, also called Kasheya, an ally of Rama.
PRATHISHTHANA. A city founded by King Kardameya.
PRATIHARA. A doorkeeper.
PRATYAKSTHALI. A sacred grove or a site facing the west.
PRAUSTHAPADA. The month which is part of August and September.
PRAYAGA. The confluence of the Ganges and the Yamuna, which is considered a sacred spot.
PRETAS. Ghosts.

PRISHATA. A spotted deer or piebald horse.

PRITHIVI. The earth.

PRITHU. The son of Anaranya and the father of Trishanku.
A monkey warrior.

PRITHUGRIVA. A titan.

PRIYAKA. A dappled deer.

PULAHA. The twelfth Prajapati.

PULOMA. The daughter of the Demon Vaishvanara who became the wife of Kashyapa.

PUNARVASU. The seventh and considered the most auspicious Nakshatra q.v.

PUNDARIKA. A nymph.

PUNDRAS. A country.

PUNTIKASTHALA. A nymph outraged by Ravana.

PUNYASHLOKA. ' Well spoken of ', ' Famed ', a title of Vishnu.

PURANAS. Legends and tales of ancient times in epic form; there are eighteen main Puranas.

PURANDARA. ' Destroyer of Cities ', a title of Indra.

PURODHAS. See Purohita.

PUROHITA. A family priest.

PURU. The son of Yayati.

PURURAVA. A king who yielded to Ravana without fighting.

PURURAVAS. The son of Budha and Ila. Pururavas married the Nymph Urvashi and their son was Ayus.

PURUSHA. The Supreme Spirit, the Soul of the Universe, the original man.
A measurement, said to be twelve span.

PURVAJA. 'Appearing before creation', a title applied to ancestors.

PUSHA or PUSHAN. The sun or ' Newly-risen Sun ' or ' Maintainer ', a Vedic Deity, brother of Surya, personified as a herdsman in the heavens.

PUSHKALA. Bharata's son.

PUSHKALAVATA. The City of the Gandharvas ruled over by Bharata's son.

PUSHKARA. A general in Varuna's army.

PUSHPADANTA. ' Flowery-toothed ', the name of one of Shiva's attendants.
A Sage.

PUSHPITAKA. A mountain in the sea where Celestial Beings dwelt.

PUSHPOTAKA. A female titan, the daughter of Sumali.

PUSHYA. A constellation of three stars considered to be auspicious. When the moon is in a certain degree of the Sign Cancer, it is said to be under the Pushya Asterism.

PUTRA. A son, who is said to deliver his father from hell or ' Put '.

PUTTRESTI. A ceremony for extending the race by the birth of sons.

R

RABHASA A titan warrior.
RABHRU. A Gandharva, one of the guardians of the sandalwood forest.
RAGHAVA. A title of those belonging to the House of Raghu to which King Dasaratha and his forbears belonged.
RAGHU. The son of Kakutstha and father of Pravriddha.
RAHU. A mythical demon said to cause the eclipse of the sun or moon by assuming a meteor's shape.
RAJAGRIHA. The city ruled over by Bharata's maternal uncle, from which Bharata was brought home on the occasion of Rama's exile.
RAJAHAMSA. A royal swan or flamingo.
RAJARISHI. A royal Rishi. See also under Rishi.
RAJAS. See under Gunas.
RAJASUYA SACRIFICE. A great sacrifice performed in ancient times at the installation of a monarch.
RAJATALAYA. The 'Place of the Silver-navelled One', a mountain near Mount Kailasha.
RAKA. One of Sumali's sons.
RAKSHA RITES. Rites to avert evil.
RAKSHASAS. Titans or demons.
RAKSHASI. A female titan or demon.
RAKTA. 'Of a red or crimson colour', a name of the Sun.
RAMA or RAMACHANDRA. The Incarnation of Vishnu who appeared as the eldest son of King Dasaratha. It is round this great figure that the Ramayana is written.
RAMA-KATHA. The recitation of 'Ramayana' which has been a tradition in India for thousands of years.
RAMBHA. A nymph who symbolized the perfection of beauty and who was often sent from Indra's realm to distract Sages from their pious practices.
A monkey leader.
RAMYA. A mountain.
RASALA. A preparation of buttermilk.
RASATALA. A hell, said to be at the bottom of the sea; it was explored by the sons of Sagara and is often mentioned.
RASHMIKETU. A titan warrior slain by Rama.
RASHTRAVARDHANA. One of Rama's ministers.
RATALAYA. 'Silver-navelled', the abode of a form of Hiranyagarbha.
RATHA. A chariot.
RATNA. A necklace.
RAURAVA. One of the hells.
RAVANA. A titan who became King of Lanka and after countless wicked deeds, carried off Sita and was ultimately slain by Rama.

RAVI. The Sun.
RENUKA. The wife of Yamadagni and the mother of Parasurama.
RICHIKA. An ascetic who gave his second son Shunashepha to be sacrificed.
The son of Bhrigu to whom Vishnu gave his bow.
The husband of Satyavati.
RIG or RIG-VEDA. The original Veda, a collection of hymns.
RIKSHABHA. A mountain.
RIKSHAS. The bears.
RIKSHAVAT. A mountain.
RIKSHYA. A monkey.
RISHAKHA. A monkey leader.
RISHI. A great Sage or illumined Being of which there were four classes :—
Maharishi—A great Rishi.
Rajarishi—A royal Rishi.
Brahmarishi. A sacred Rishi.
Devarishi. A divine Rishi.
RISHYAMUKA. The mountain on which Sugriva took refuge and where he met Rama.
RISHYASHRINGA. The ' Deer-horned ', the son of Sage Vibhandaka, who married the daughter of King Lomapada, Shanta, and later performed the Puttresti ceremony for King Dasaratha.
RITADHAMAN. A title of Vishnu meaning ' Of true and pure nature '. It is also used for the thirteenth Manu.
RITU. Any fixed time appointed for regular worship or sacrifice such as Vasanta, the Spring; Grishna the hot season; Sarad, the Autumn; Hemantashishshira, the cold and dewy season.
RITVIJS. The priests officiating at an installation ceremony.
ROD OF BRAHMA. See also WEAPONS Glossary.
ROHI. A fish—Cyprynus Rohita Ham.
A deer.
ROHINI. The Star Aldebaran.
ROHITA. A species of deer.
A Gandharva who guarded a sandalwood forest.
ROHITAS. The name of the steeds of the Sun-god.
The name of a Deity celebrated in the Atharva Veda probably a form of the Sun or Fire-god.
ROMASHA. A monkey.
RUDHIRASHANA. A titan.
RUDRA. A name of Shiva.
RUDRAS. The sons of Kashyapa and Aditi.
RUDRASHARAPRAMOKSHA. A place sacred to Shiva where he discharged the arrow at Tripura the Demon.
RUMA. Sugriva's consort.
RUMANA. A monkey warrior, general in Sugriva's army.

RUPAYAKA. An island full of gold mines where the monkeys searched for Sita.
RURU. A deer.
RUSHIRAS. A class of Yatudhanas.

SACHI. Indra's consort who was said to be the daughter of the Daitya Puloman.
SADAGATI. 'Ever-going', a name of Vayu, the Wind-god.
SADHYA. The daughter of Daksha.
SADHYAS. The personified rites and prayers of the Vedas, who dwell between heaven and earth and are classes as Deities.
SADIN. A titan.
SAGARA. A king whose history is recorded in Balakanda.
SAHASRADHARA. The discus of Vishnu that was forged by Vishvakarma.
SAHASRAKSHA. The 'Thousand-eyed God', a title of Indra.
SAHASRARCHIS. 'Thousand-rayed', a title of the Sun.
SAHIRA. A mountain.
SAHYA. A mountain passed by the monkeys on their march to the sea.
SAKATA. A wooden mortar for cleaning rice.
SALAKATANTAKA. The daughter of Sandhya and the consort of the Titan Vidyukesha.
SALAKATANKATA. A race of giants to which Malyavan, Mali and Sumali belonged.
SALVEYAS. The mountains where the Monkey Sharabha lived.
SAMHRADA. One of Sumali's sons.
A titan warrior.
SAMIDH The fuel, wood, logs or grass in a sacrificial offering.
SAMNADA. A monkey chief.
SAMNADANA. Grandsire of the monkeys.
SAMNUNATA. A titan.
SAMPATI. The vulture, brother of Jatayu, who told the monkeys where Sita was held captive.
SAMROCANA. A mountain.
SAMSKARAS. Latent impressions.
SAMUDRA. A measure, a Madhya twenty times.
The waters as a whole, the ocean.
SAMVA. The mountain on which Hanuman alighted on his flight to Lanka.
SAMVARTA. The brother of Brihaspati.
SAMVASADANA. A titan slain by Hanuman's father, Kesarin.
SAMYODHAKANTAKA. A Yaksha, one of Kuvera's warriors.
SANATKUMARA. One of the mind-born sons of Brahma.
SANDHANA. A mountain.

SANDHYA. The Goddess of the dawn and dusk.
Devotions undertaken at dawn and dusk.

SANKU. A measure, a thousand Arbudas q.v.

SANTANAS or SANTANAKAS. A region near or the extension of Brahmaloka where the bears and monkeys went on leaving their bodies.

SANU. A monkey warrior.

SANUPRASTHA. A monkey warrior.

SAPINDI. The Sapindi Ceremony was undertaken for the establishing the connection with kindred through funeral offerings.
One of the titan generals.

SAPTAJANAS. The hermitage of the seven Sages.

SAPTAGHNA. A titan warrior.

SAPTARSHI. The seven Rishis who are said to be the Regents of the Seven Stars of the Plough.

SAPTA-SAPTI. 'He from whom proceed the seven senses' or 'Who has seven steeds', a title of the Sun-god.

SARAMA. The daughter of the King of the Gandharvas Shailusha; she was the consort of Bibishana.

SARANGA. A bird or animal of variegated colour such as the peacock or spotted deer.

SARASA. A goose.

SARASWATI. The Goddess of speech and learning.
A river.

SARAYU. The sacred river, the Sarju.

SARGA. A chapter

SARVABHAUMA. The elephant that carried Kuvera.
One of the elephants of the four quarters.

SARVANSHADI. Consists of 'Mura Valerian' and such drugs.

SARVASAU VARNA. A mountain.

SARVATHASIDDHA. A brahmin who ill-treated a dog, his story is told in Uttarakanda.

SARVATMABHUTI. All beings collectively.

SATARHADA. The mother of the Demon Viradha.

SATATAGA. The Wind-god.

SATYAVATI. The sister of the Sage Vishvamitra, who assumed the form of the River Kaushika.

SATYA YUGA. The Golden Age. There are four Yugas that make up the World cycle:—
Satya Yuga. Golden Age.
Treta Yuga. Silver Age.
Dwapara Yuga. Copper Age.
Kali Yuga. Black or Iron Age.

SAUDASA. A king of the Ikshvaku Race.

SAUMANASA. One of the elephants of the four quarters.
A mountain where the Ascetics or Vaikhanasas performed their austerities.

SAUMITRI. A name of Lakshmana as son of Sumitra.

SAUMYA. The Planet Mercury.

SAURA. A divine potion; the name means 'relating to the Sun'.

SAURASHTRAS. A country where the monkeys searched for Sita.

SAUVARCALA. Sochal Salt or alkali.

SAVITA or SAVITRI. The sun, the producer of heat and the spiritual faculties of heat.

SENANI. The leader of an army.
A name for the God of Love.

SETUBANDHA. The sacred spot where Rama threw the bridge over the sea to Lanka.

SHABALA. The wish-fulfilling cow belonging to Vasishtha.

SHABARI or SHIBRI. A female ascetic whom Rama visited while in exile.

SHADVALA. A grassy spot.

SHAILA. A mountain.

SHAILODA. A river.

SHAILUSHA. A Gandharva, guardian of a sandalwood forest.

SHAIVALA. The mountain where Rama found the Shudra ascetic and slew him.

SHAKAS. A people.

SHAKRA. A name of Indra, King of the Gods.

SHAKRADHWAJA. A standard or flag set up in honour of Indra.

SHAKRALAYA. The abode of Shakra.

SHAKRAMALI. A fabulous thorny rod of the cotton tree used for torturing the wicked in hell.

SHALYAKA. A porcupine. See also WEAPONS GLOSSARY.

SHAMBARA. The Demon of Drought represented in the Rig-veda as the enemy of Indra.

SHAMBARAKARMOKA. The place of Shambara's bow.

SHAMBHU. 'Bringer of Felicity', the name of a Vedic Deity, later associated with Shiva.

SHAMBHUININ. The 'Soul of the Universe' in its cosmic form of the eleven Rudras.

SHAMBUKA. A Shudra who sought to become a brahmin and was slain by Rama.

SHAMKHA. One of the Great Serpents.

SHANKHAS. A measure, a hundred billions or a hundred thousand crores.

SHANKHASHUDA. A monkey warrior.

SHANKU. A measure, ten billions.

SHANTA. The daughter of King Lomapada who was wedded to the Sage Rishyashringa.

SHARABANDA. The mother of the Demon Viradha.

SHARABHA. The Chief of the Bears.

SHARABHANGA. A Sage who was visited by Rama and Sita in the Dandaka Forest.

SHARABHU. ' Reed-born ', a name of Karttikeya.
SHARABI. A monkey warrior.
SHARAGULMA. A monkey leader.
SHARDULA. One of Ravana's spies.
SHARIKA. A bird, ' Turdas Salica ' or ' Gracula Religiosa '.
SHARMISHTA. The daughter of Diti and wife of King Yayati.
SHARNGA. The ' Bow of Time ' belonging to Vishnu.
SHASHABINDU. The son of Kardameya.
SHASHANKA. The consort of Rohini, a name of the moon.
SHASHI. ' Hare-marked ', a name of the Moon-god.
SHASHTRAS. Teachings of divine and recognized authority.
SHATABALI. A monkey leader.
SHATAGULMA. A monkey warrior.
SHATANANDA. The son of the Sage Gautama and the Spiritual Director of King Janaka.
SHATAPATRA. A title meaning ' Having a hundred petals '.
SHATAVALA. A monkey leader.
SHATAVALI. A monkey warrior.
SHATHA. A titan.
SHATRUGHATIN. A son of Shatrughna.
SHATRUGHNA. ' Slayer of Enemies ', the fourth son of King Dasaratha.
SHATRUMJAYA. The elephant that carried Sugriva in Rama's coronation procession.
SHIKHIN. The God of War, Karttikeya is called by this name as the offspring of Shikhin or Shiva.
SHIRIRANASHANA. ' Remover of intellectual arrogance or evil-mindedness ', a title.
SHISHIRA. ' Benevolent, cool-rayed ', a title.
SHISHUMARA. ' Child-killer ', a word used for a crocodile, a porpoise or a dolphin.
SHITIKANTHA. Shiva, the name means ' bark-throated '.
SHIVA. The Lord in the aspect of ' Destroyer of Ignorance ' and ' Lord of Bliss '.
SHIVI or SHIVYA. A king of the Raghu dynasty who rescued the God Agni when he had transformed himself into a pigeon and was pursued by Indra in the form of a hawk.
SHONA. A sacred river.
SHONITAKSHA. A titan warrior.
SHRAVANA. The month which is part of July and August.
A Nakshatra q.v.
SHRAVASTI. The city ruled over by Lava, Rama's son.
SHRI. The consort of Vishnu, Lakshmi who is the Goddess of Prosperity.
A title of courtesy.
SHRIMATI. The wife of the Sage Kapila.
SHRIVATSA. The mark or curl that Vishnu bears on his breast.

SHRUTA-KIRTI. The consort of Shatrughna.
SHRUTI. The Vedas severally.
SHTANU. ' The Firm ', a name of Shiva.
SHUDRA. One of the lowest caste.
SHUKA. One of Ravana's spies.
A Gandharva.
A Parrot.
SHUKRA. The Planet Venus.
A great Sage, Shukracharya who was said to be the son of Bhrigu and whose patrionymic was Bhargava.
SHUMBHA. Shumbha and Nishumbha were two Asuras and brothers who warred against the Gods and were slain by the Goddess Durga.
A monkey warrior.
SHUNAKA. The son of the Sage Richika.
An Asura.
SHUNASHEPHA. The second son of the Sage Richika who was offered as a human sacrifice but saved by the Sage Vishvamitra.
SHURA. A Gandharva, guardian of a sandalwood forest.
SHURASHENA. The region round Mathura. The word means ' Worthy of Heroes '.
A city ruled over by Shatrughna.
SHURPANAKHA. The sister of Ravana, a female titan who was mutilated by Rama and Lakshmana.
SHVASANA. A name of the Wind-god.
A name for the Demon of Drought.
SHVETA. A mountain.
The Planet Venus.
The King of Vidarbha.
A monkey warrior.
A son of King Sudesa.
SHYENI. The daughter of Kashyapa and Tamra, mother of birds of prey.
SIDDHARTHA. One of King Dasaratha's counsellors.
SIDDHAS. Semi-divine Beings who dwell between the earth and the sun.
SIDHU. A kind of rum distilled from molasses.
SIKHANDI. ' Overcomer ', a title.
SINDHU. The River Indus.
A country east of Koshala.
SINGHIKA or SIMHIKA. A female demon who caught hold of Hanuman's shadow when he was crossing the ocean.
SINHAS. ' Flying Lions ', probably eagles.
SITA. The daughter of King Janaka, King of Mithila, and Rama's consort.
SIX KINDS OF TASTE. Sweet, bitter, acid, salt, pungent, acrid and harsh.

SKANDA. The God of War who was the son of Shiva, also called Karttikeya.

SLESHMATAKA. A kind of wood taken from the Cordia Myxa Trees. A forest.

SMRITI. Literally ' What is remembered ', tradition or laws given by Manu and others.

SOMA. The Moon-god, said to be a son of the Sage Atri.
The juice that is fermented from Asclepias-acida; it is used as a beverage or libation in sacred ceremonies.

SOMADATTA. The daughter of Urmila and mother of Brahmadatta.

SOMAGIRI. A mountain.

SOURA SOURAHTRA. Countries east of Koshala.

SRIMARA. A marine monster.
A species of deer.

STHULASHIRA. A Sage who was harassed by the Demon Kabandha.

STONE OF HIMAVAT. The stone on which Rudra sat to practice asceticism.

SUBAHU. A son of Shatrughna, who was installed in the City of Madhava.
A monkey warrior.
A demon who disturbed the sacrifices of the Sage Vishvamitra.

SUBHADRA. A sacred tree.

SUCHENA. A son of Varuna.

SUDAMSHTRA. A monkey leader.

SUDANANA. One of King Janaka's ministers.

SUDARSHANA. A lake covered with silver lotuses.
An island where the sun is said to rise.
An elephant ridden in battle by Mahadeva.

SUDESA. A king of the Vidarbhas.

SUDHAMA. The name of one of the guardians of the four quarters.
A name of Vishnu.
A mountain.

SUGRIVA. The King of the Monkeys, an ally of Rama.

SUHOTRA. A monkey warrior.

SUKANABHA. A titan.

SUKESHA. A Daitya, the son of Vidyutkesha; his story is told in Uttarakanda.

SUMAGADHA. One of Rama's ministers.

SUMALI. The son of Sukesha and father of Mandodari, Ravana's consort.

SUMANTRA. One of the ministers at Dasaratha's court.

SUMATI. The younger wife of King Sagara who gave birth to six thousand sons.

SUMERU. A sacred mountain.

SUMITRA. The mother of Lakshmana and Shatrughna.

SUMUKHA. A Sage.

SUN. The Sun appears under countless names such as :—Anshuman, Ahaskara, Bhanu, Bhaskara, Divakara, Dinakara, Gavasthana, Prabhakara, Surya, Savita, Sura, Suvarnasdrisha, Twasta, Vyomanatha and others.

SUNABHA. 'Having a beautiful navel', a name given to the Mountain Mainaka.

A name given to the son of Garuda.

SUNDA. The father of Maricha.

SUNDARI. A name meaning 'Beautiful' the consort of Malyavan.

SUPARNA. A name of Garuda, King of the Birds.

SUPARSHVA. A son of the Vulture Sampati.

SUPATALA. A Titan warrior.

SUPRABHA. A Goddess who created celestial weapons; she was a daughter of Daksha.

SUPTAGNA. A monkey warrior.

SURA. The Sun.

SURABHI. The daughter of Krodhavasha; she became the consort of Kashyapa.

SURAJI. One of Rama's courtiers.

SURAMUKRA. A titan general.

SURAS. A name of the Gods; in the Veda it is applied to the offspring of the Sun.

SURASA. A female demon who sought to obstruct Hanuman when he was traversing the ocean.

SURASHENA. The country round Mathura.

SURASHTRAS. One of King Dasaratha's ministers.

SURATHA. A king who yielded to Ravana without fighting.

A son of King Sudesa, King of the Vidarbhas.

SURYAKSHA. A monkey warrior.

SURYANANA. A monkey warrior.

SURYANBANDANA. The place where the suns meet.

SURYAPRABHA. The abode of Surya, the Sun-god.

SURYASACHU. A titan.

SURYASHATRU. A titan general.

SURYAVANA. A mountain.

SUSHENA. A monkey general, the father of Tara, Bali's consort.

SUTA. Khara's charioteer.

SUTAGNA. A son of Malyavan and Sundari.

SUTAS. A class of personal attendants.

SUTIKSHNA. A Sage who lived in the Dandaka Forest and entertained Rama, Lakshmana and Sita during their exile.

SUTRAS. Verses expressed in brief and technical language; poetical rhythms and stanzas. There are Sutras on innumerable subjects beginning with the Vedas.

SUVARCHALA. The consort of the Sun-god.

SUVARNA. One of the gold and silver islands rich in gold mines.

SUVARNASADRISHA. 'Of golden aspect', a name of the Sun.

SUVARNIMERU. One of the so-called ' Golden Mountains ' of which there were sixty thousand.

SUVASASUVARNA. A mountain.

SUVELA. A mountain near Lanka where Rama stationed His troops.

SUYAJNA. One of King Dasaratha's spiritual Directors.

SVADAMSHTRAS. Ornaments worn in the ears.

SVADHA. An oblation offered to the Pitris. The word means ' Inherent power or strength '.

SVADU. A sea out of which the Jarupashila Mountain rose.

SVAHA. The consort of Agni.
A word of power used in invocation and sacrifices.

SVAHAKARAS. The utterance of ' Svaha ' at ceremonies.

SWAMPRABHA. The daughter of the Sage Merusavarni.

SWAMPRABHU. ' Self-shining ', a title.

SWARGA. The Celestial Region.

SWARGIN. An inhabitant of the celestial Region.

SWYAMBHU. The ' Self-existent ', a name of the Creator.

SWYAMVARA. A ceremony where the bride chooses her own consort.

SVASTI. A benediction.

SVASTIVACHANA. A religious rite preparatory to a sacrifice.

SVASTIYATREYA. A Sage.

SYANDARA. A river.

SYRYAVAM. A mountain in the sea.

TAITTIRYA. One of the Upanishads.

TAKSHA. A son of Bharata.

TAKSHAKA. A name of Vishvakarma.
A name of one of the Great Serpents.

TAKSHASHILA. The city ruled by Taksha, Bharata's son, said to be identified with Taxila that was occupied by the Greeks and barbarians.

TALA. A leather strap used by archers.
A clapper used in music.

TAMABHEDA. ' Dispeller of darkness ', a name of the Sun.

TAMAS. See under GUNAS.

TAMRA. One of the wives of Kashyapa.

TAMRAPARNI. A river reputed to be abounding in crocodiles.

TAPANA. ' Possessor of Wealth ', a title associated with the Sun, a Star and a Titan.

TAPAS. Penance or austerity.

TAPOVANA. A forest.

TARA. The consort of Bali.
A monkey general.

TARAKA. A meteor.
TARASA. A monkey warrior.
TAREYA. A monkey leader.
TARKSHYA. In ancient times considered the personification of the Sun in the form of a bird, later it became the name of Garuda.
TARKSHYAS. The father of the monkeys.
TATAKA. A Yakshini, the mother of Maricha.
 A lake.
TEJAS. Lustre, energy or effulgence and spiritual power.
THIRTY, The. This title 'TRI-DASA' applies to the Gods; in round numbers thirty-three—twelve Adityas, eight Vasus, eleven Rudras and the two Ashvins.
THREE DIVISIONS OF TIME, The. Past, present and future.
THREE FIRES, The. The Ahavaniya Fire in the east for offerings to the Devas, the Dakshina Fire in the south for offerings to the Pitris and the Gahapatya Fire in the west which is perpetually maintained and passed on from father to son and from which the other sacrificial fires are lit.
THREE HUMOURS OF THE BODY, The. Wind, bile and phlegm.
THREE KINDS OF ACTION. Trivial, common or ordinary, important and urgent.
THREE PAIRS OF QUALITIES. Renown and virility, majesty and beauty, knowledge and dispassion.
THREE SACRED ABODES, or The THREE WORLDS. Bhur, Bhuvah, Swah, the lower, middle and upper worlds, also called Triloka and Tri-bhuvana, that is heaven, earth and the lower worlds.
TIKSHAVEGA. A titan.
TILAKA. A mark of auspiciousness placed on the forehead.
TIME. See KALA.
TIMI. A whale or large fish.
TIMIDHVAJA. The father of Indra and also of the Danavas and Shambara.
TIMINGILA. 'Swallowing even a 'Timi' or fabulous fish', a name given to describe a sea-monster.
TIMIRONMATHANA. 'Lord of the Welkin', the Sun.
TISHYA. An asterism shaped like an arrow containing three stars, also called Pushya and Sidhya.
 The Kali Yuga.
TRETAYUGA. The Silver Age.
TRI-BHUVANA, TRI-DASA. See under The THIRTY.
TRIDIVA. The Region of the Gods.
TRIJATA. A brahmin whose story is told in Balakanda.
 A female titan who spoke in defence of Sita.
TRIKUTA. 'Three-peaked', the mountain on which Lanka was built.

TRINABINDU. A Sage whose daughter became the consort of the Sage Vishravas.

TRIPATHAGA. 'Three-way-flowing', the 'Traverser of the Three Worlds', a name of the Ganges.

TRIPURA. A demon slain by Shiva.
A city put to fire by the Gods.

TRISHANKU. A king of the Solar Race whose story is told in Balakanda.
A constellation.

TRISHIRAS. Also called 'Trimurdhana', a three-headed titan slain by Rama.

TRIVARSHA. Three consecutive showers favourable to crops.

TRIVISHTAPA. The City of Indra also called Amaravati.

TRYAMBAKA. 'Three-eyed', a name of Shiva. This title can also mean 'Uttering the three Vedas or the three mystical Syllables'

TUMBURU. A Gandharva cursed by the God Kuvera and born as the Demon Viradha.

TVASHTA or TVASHTRI. A name connected with the Sun, with one of the Adityas and also Vishvakarma; The meaning is 'One who shines'.

TWICE-BORN. Only a brahmin can be strictly termed 'Twice-born', but the title came to be extended later to the warrior and the agricultural classes.

U

UCCHAISHRAVAS. The white horse of Indra produced from the churning of the ocean by Gods and Asuras. It is said to be fed on ambrosia and be the foremost of steeds.

UDAYA. A golden mountain.

UDGATAR. One of the four officiating priests at a sacrifice.

UGRA. 'Powerful', 'Formidable', 'Terrible', a name given to Rudra or Shiva and also the Sun.

UKHARA. The earth when impregnated with salt or sterile.

UKTHYA. The second day of the Ashva-medha Sacrifice.

ULKAMUKHA. A monkey, the son of Hutashana, the God of Fire.

UNMATTA. A titan warrior.

UPAKHYANAS. Episodes or tales, traditional recitations.

UPA-NAYA. The ceremony of the investiture of the sacred thread by which act spiritual birth is conferred on a youth and he becomes a member of the Brahmin or Twice-born class. The age at which this ceremony takes place is between eight and sixteen years.

UPANISHAD. Esoteric doctrine. The third division of the Vedas, forming part of the revealed Word.

UPASUNDA. A titan warrior.

UPATAKSHARA. A Great Serpent.

UPENDRA. A name of Vishnu and later of Indra.

URAGAS. Great Serpents, those of the Naga Race.

URMILA. The consort of Lakshmana.

URVASHI. A nymph mentioned in the Rig-Veda. Many legends are told of her in the classics.

USHANAS. Another name of Shukra, the Guru of the Asuras and Daityas. This Sage assisted Indrajita in his sacrifices.

USHARA. Saline soil. (See Uttarakanda, Ch. LXXXVI.)

USHIRABIJA. The mountain that is also called Mandara where King Marutta performed his sacrifice.

USHIRAS. A hair-like grass growing on the golden trees of hell. See also FLOWERS and TREES Glossary.

UTTARAGA. A river.

UTTARA KANDA. The seventh and supplementary book of 'Ramayana'.

UTTARA KURUS. A race said to befriend spiritual persons.

UTTARA PHALGUNI. A constellation under which Sita was said to have been born.

VACHASPATI. The Mother of the Gods and Goddess of speech and learning. She is also called Saraswati.

VADABA or VADAVA. 'Mare's Fire', the subterranean fire or the fire of the lower regions, fabled to emerge from a cavity called the 'Mare's mouth' under the sea.

VADAVAMUKHA. 'Mare's mouth', the entrance to the nether region said to be found at the south pole where the submarine fire is found.

VAGADEVA. One of the Adityas presiding over wealth.

VAGHRINASAKA. A dark-throated, white-winged bird.
A species of goat.

VAHNI. 'Bearer of Brightness', a title.
A monkey warrior.

VAHNYALAYA. The abode of the Fire-god.

VAHUDAMSHTRA. A titan.

VAIDEHA or VIDEHA. The kingdom ruled over by Janaka.

VAIDEHI. The name of Sita as daughter of Janaka, King of Vaideha.

VAIDISHA. The city where Shatrughna's son ruled.

VAIDYA. A physician.

VAIDYUTA. A mountain.

VAIJANTA. A city founded by King Nimi.

VAIKHANASA. A class of Rishi or Hermit who dwelt on Mount Saumanasa.

VAINATEYA. A name of Garuda.
VAIROCHANA or VIROCHANA. A name of the Sun and Moon, meaning 'Illumining'.
One descended from Virochana.
A patronymic of Bali.
The Son of Prahlada.
VAISHNAVA. Relating to Vishnu or a sacrifice in his honour.
The Vaishnavas are devotees of Vishnu.
VAISHRAVANA. A name of Kuvera, Ravana's brother.
The name of the daughter of the Sage Bharadwaja.
VAISHRAVANAVANLAYA. The abode of Kuvera.
VAISHVADEVAS. Relating to all the Divinities or Vaishvas or Vishvas.
VAISHVANARA. The God of Fire, Agni.
The Zodiac.
VAISHYAS. Those of the merchant or agricultural classes.
VAITARANI. A river in hell.
VAIVASVAT. See Vivasvat.
VAIVASVATA. A name of the God of Death, Yama.
VAJAPEYA. A sacrifice at which an acetous mixture of meal and water is offered to the Gods.
VAJI-MEDHA. The Horse-sacrifice. 'Vaji' meaning 'swiftness' or 'strength' as applied to horses.
VAJRA. A mountain.
VAJRABANU. A titan.
VAJRADAMSHTRA. 'With teeth like thunderbolts', the name of a titan slain by Angada.
VAJRADHARA. 'Wielder of the Thunderbolt', a title of Indra.
VAJRAHANU. A powerful titan.
VAJRAKAYA. A titan warrior.
VAJRAMUSHTI. A titan warrior.
A son of Malyavan and Sundari.
VAJRAVALA. The daughter of Virochana who married Kumbhakarna.
VALAKHILYAS. Divine Beings, the size of a thumb, sixty thousand of whom sprang from the body of Brahma and are said to surround the chariot of the Sun.
VALI. Offerings to the Spirits of the air.
VALIMUKHAS. 'Wrinkled-faced Ones', the monkeys.
VALLAKA. A small crane.
An Indian lute.
VALMIKI. Poet, Sage and author of 'Ramayana'.
VALUKINI. A river.
VAMADEVA. A great Rishi who was present at Rama's installation.
VAMANA. The Holy Dwarf, the fifth Incarnation of Vishnu.
VANA. A forest.
VANAPRASTHA. A festival similar to a Harvest Festival.

VANARAS. 'Dwellers in the forest', a name given to the monkey race. A special breed of elephants.

VANARIS. Female monkeys.

VANCHULAKA. A mythical bird.

VARANA. A mountain.

VARARANI. The mother of kine and bulls.

VARUNA. The Indian Neptune, Lord of the Waters.

VARUNI. The daughter of Varuna who was the personification of wine. Wine prepared from Hogsweed distilled with date or palm juice.

VARUTHI. A river.

VASAVA. A name of Indra.

VASAVI. A name of Bali, as son of Indra or Vasava.

VASHAT. A word of power, a holy Syllable.

VASHATKARA. The utterance of 'Vashat' at ceremonies. A Sage.

VASISHTHA. A great Sage, the spiritual Preceptor of King Dasaratha and Rama's own Guru.

VASTUPATI. 'Abiding Lord', a title.

VASU. The son of King Nriga, whose story is told in 'Uttarakanda.' One of the Seven Immortal Sages.

VASUDA. 'One who grants wealth or treasure', a name of the earth. A Gandharvi who married Mali.

VASUDEVA. A name of the Lord.

VASUDHA. 'Containing wealth', a name of the earth.

VASUKI. The Serpent King.

VASURETAS. A name of Agni.

VASUS. The sons of Kashyapa and Aditi. The eight Vasus were originally personifications of natural phenomena, they were Apa, Dhruva, Soma, Dhara, Anila, Anala, Pratyusha and Prabhasa.

VASVOKARA. Another name of Amaravati, the City of Indra.

VATA. A name of Vayu, the Wind-god.

VATAPI. A demon consumed by the Sage Agastya.

VAYU. The God of the Wind.

VEDANGAS. A sacred science considered subordinate to and in some sense a part of the Vedas. Six subjects come under the denomination :—Siksha—pronunciation, Kalpa—religious rites, Vyakarana—Grammar, Chandas—Prosody, Jyotish—Astronomy, Nirukti—Explanation of difficult words.

VEDAS. The Holy Scriptures of the Hindu religion, the fountain of divine knowledge.

VEDAVATI. The daughter of the Brahmarshi Kushadwaja.

VEGADARSHIN. A monkey leader.

VEDHAS. 'Arranger', 'Disposer', 'Creator', a name of Brahma.

VEDI. An altar of Kusha Grass or a place of sacrifice.

VENA. A river.

VIBHABASU. 'Abounding in light', a title of the God of Fire.

VIBHANDAKA. The son of the Sage Kashyapa and the father of Rishyashringa.

VIBHUDAS. Celestial Beings or Gods.

VIBISHANA. See Bibishana.

VIBUDHA. A Deity or Teacher of the spiritual truth.
The Moon.

VIDARBHA. A country, probably Birar, whose capital was Kundipura.

VIDHATAR. A name of Brahma, the Creator.

VIDYADHARAS. 'Magical-knowledge Holder', a particular class of good or evil spirits attendant on the Gods.

VIDYUDRUNA. A titan.

VIDYUJJIHVA. A titan skilled in magic who created an illusory head of Rama and his bow to deceive Sita.

VIDYULDAMSHTRA. A monkey warrior.

VIDYUNMALI. A monkey warrior.

VIDYUNMALIN. A titan warrior.

VIDYUTKESHA. A Daitya, the son of Heti.

VIGHANA. A titan.

VIHARA. A pleasure garden or recreation ground, temple or sanctuary.

VIHARAS. 'Those who roam about at pleasure', a name given to the monkeys.

VIJAYA. A minister at King Dasaratha's court.

VIJIHVA. A titan.

VIKATA. A titan.

VIMPAKSHA. A titan.

VIMUKHA. A Sage.

VINA. An Indian lute.

VINATA. The mother of Garuda.
A monkey warrior.

VINAYAKAS. A class of Beings, sometimes malevolent.

VINDHA. The hour that is auspicious for finding what has been lost.

VINDHYA. A mountain ordered by Agastya not to increase in height.

VIPAGA. A river.

VIPANCI. An Indian lute.

VIRA. A name of the Sun.

VIRA POSTURE. The posture which is favourable to the regulation of breath.

VIRABANU. A monkey warrior.

VIRADHA. A demon, the son of Java and Shatarada who was slain by Rama and had formerly been the Gandharva Tumburu.

VIROCHANA. See Vairochana.

VIRUPAKSHA. A titan, also called Virupanetra. The word Virupaksha means 'Of distorted eyes', it is a name also given to Shiva who is said to have three eyes.
The son of Malyavan.
One of the Elephants of the Four Quarters.

VIRYASANA. The son of King Saudasa who became known as Kalmashapada on account of a curse.
VISHAKA. A lunar asterism.
A month in the flowering season.
VISHALA. A titan.
VISHALAKSHA. 'Having beautiful eyes', a name of Shiva, Garuda and a Great Serpent.
VISHAMPATI. 'Lord of Men', a title.
VISHNU. The Lord in the aspect of 'Maintainer of the Universe'.
VISHRAVAS. A great Sage born of Prajapati. The name comes from the root 'Sru' to listen, as his mother conceived when listening to the Veda being recited. He is said to be the son of Poulastya in 'Ramayana' and was the father of Ravana and Kuvera.
VISHVA. The daughter of Daksha.
A title meaning 'He who pervades all'.
VISHVAS or VISHVADEVAS. All the Gods who are said to be the 'Preservers of Men' and 'Bestowers of Rewards'. They are the sons of Vishva.
VISHVAKARMA. The architect of the Gods. The 'Maker of Weapons'.
VISHVAKRITA. Another name for Vishvakarma.
VISHVAMARA. 'Possessed of all desirable things' or 'Granting all boons' or 'Adored or cherished by all', a title.
VISHVAMITRA. A great Sage whose story is told in Balakanda.
VISHVANATHA. 'Lord of the Universe', a name of Shiva.
VISHVARUPA. A title of Vishnu meaning 'Omnipresent' or 'Wearing all forms'.
VISHVATAM. The God of the Wind.
VITAPAVATI. The City over which Kuvera ruled.
VITARDANA. A titan warrior.
VITTAPA. A name of Kuvera.
VIVASVAT. 'The Brilliant One', the Sun. Vivasvat was said to be the father of Manu.
VRANA. The well of the waters of hell.
VRASHPARVANA. A Daitya, father of Sharmishta, the consort of King Yayati.
VRINDA. A large number, a multitude.
VRISHA. The Bull of Shiva, also called Nandi.
VRISHABHA. A monkey warrior.
VRISHADWAJA. An appellation of Shiva 'Having the Bull as his vehicle'.
VRISHTI. A minister at Rama's court.
VRITRA or VRITASURA. A demon slain by Indra.
One of Bali's forbears.
VYAVANAYAKAS. Servants of Queen Kaushalya.
VYAVASAYA. The power of withdrawal.
A name of Vishnu.
VYOMANATHA. 'Lord of the Welkin', the Sun.

W

X

Y

YADU. The son of Yayati and Devayani. Yayati was the founder of the Yadavas in which line Krishna was born.
YAJNA. A sacrifice or penance.
YAJNAKOPA. A titan warrior slain by Rama.
YAJNASHATRU. A titan warrior.
YAJURVEDA. The part of the Veda that treats of rituals.
YAKSHA. A minister of Sugriva.
YAKSHAS. Supernatural Beings, attendant on Kuvera.
YAKSHINIS. Female Yakshas.
YAMA. The God of Death.
YAMALA. An Asura, enemy of the Gods.
YAMALA-ARJUNA. Enemies of Krishna who in the form of trees he uprooted as a child.
YAMUNA. A sacred river.
YATUDHANAS. Evil Spirits that assume various forms. The name is also given to the Rakshasas.
YAVA. An island searched by the monkeys for Sita and Ravana.
YAVAKRITA. A Rishi.
YAVANAS. A people said to have been born of the sacred cow Shabala.
YAYANTA. One of Rama's ministers.
YAYATI. The son of Nahusha, a forbear of King Dasaratha, his story appears in the 'Mahabharata' and the 'Vishnu Purana'.
YOGA. 'Union': the methods (of meditation, mind-control, self-discipline etc.) through which man came to realise the identity of his own essential being with God.
YOGANDHARA. 'The United', a title.
YOJANA. A measurement approximately four or five miles.
YUDDHONMATTA. A titan warrior.
YUDHAJITA. Prince of Kaikeya, Bharata's maternal uncle.
YUGA. A world Age or period. The Yugas are four in number and their duration several thousand years. Between each of the periods there is a time called Sandhya or Twilight when creation is withdrawn and lies latent in the Supreme Spirit, Brahman.
YUGANTADAHAKA. The 'End of Time', or the 'Consumer of the Worlds Cycles,' a name of Vishnu.
YUPAKSHA. A titan slain by Hanuman.
YUVANASHVA. The son of Dhundhumara and father of Mandhata.

FLOWERS AND TREES

(Wherever possible Latin or English derivatives are given but in some cases no equivalent has been traced.)

A

ADUMBARI. A species of Fig.

ADUMVARI. Agaru Amyris Agallochum, a species of Sandalwood.

AGNIMUKHA. Semicarpus Anacardium Zeylanica, Plumbago.

AGNIMUKHYA. The Marking Nut Plant.

AMLAKA. Phyllanthus Emblica. A many-branched shrub resembling Hemlock. The fruit is known as Myrabolan and has healing properties; it is often seen in the hand of 'Menhla' the Buddha of Medicine,

AMRA. Mango Mangifera Indica. A short-trunked tree covered with evergreen foliage which flowers from January to March; the blooms are partly white and partly greenish yellow with an orange stripe on each petal. This tree is sacred to Hindus and Buddhists. The wood is used for funeral pyres and the flowers are dedicated to the Moon and the God of Love.

ANKOLA or ANKOTA or ANKOLATA. Alangium Hexapetalum. A small or medium sized, partially deciduous tree with branches armed with spines that grows throughout India in dry regions. The wood is olive brown, hard and close grained, the leaves oblong, glabrous and dark green. The flowers single or in clusters are white and scented; the fruit, a berry, is purplish red. Roots and fruit are used medicinally. Said to be a cure for snake and rat bite and also to alleviate colic and diseases of the blood. It is used as a substitute for Ipecacuanha.

ARAVINDA. Nymphoea Nelumbo, a water lily.

ARISTA. Sapindus Saponeria, the Soap Plant.

ARJUNA or .ARJUNAKA. Terminalia Arjuna. A species of Nimba or Neem Tree. A tall evergreen tree usually found on the banks of streams. The leaves cluster at the end of the branches and the flowers forming tassels are tiny.

ARJUNA JARUL. The Queens Flower or Crêpe Flower. An important timber tree which has medicinal value. The flowers that are pinky mauve or white appear in April and last throughout the hot season.

ASANA. Terminalia Tormentosa. A common forest tree yielding excellent timber similar to the Arjuna Tree and rarely seen outside forest areas.

ASHOKA. Saraca Indica. A small evergreen tree which produces a profusion of orange and scarlet clusters of blossom in January and February and has deep dark green shining foliage. Buddha is said to have been born under an Ashoka Tree and Sita was kept prisoner by Ravana in an Ashoka Grove. Both Hindus and Buddhists regard it as sacred and it is said to flourish where a woman's foot has trod. The bark is astringent and bitter, cooling and refrigerant, useful in colic, emaciation and certain venom poisoning; it is highly beneficial in vaginal disorders and effective in hæmorrhages and ulcers.

ASHVAKARNA or ASHWAKARNA. Vatica Robusta, the Sal Tree, a large tree that grows in the eastern districts of central India. The wood, which ranks with teak is in general use in Bengal. The flowers are abundant and whitish or pale rose in colour.

ASHVALAGNA. The Saul Tree.

ASHVATTHA or ASHWATTHA. The Fig Tree of which there are many varieties :—

Ficus Bengalensis—The Banian Tree.
Ficus Religiosa—The Pipal or Peepal Tree.
Ficus Glomerata—The Rumbal or Umbar Tree.
Ficus Elastica—The India Rubber Tree.

ATIMUKHA. Premna Spinoza. The wood of this tree is used for kindling.

ATIMUKTA. Dalbergia Oujeinensis. Grows in the hilly tracts of N. India twenty to thirty ft. high. The flowers are abundant and whitish or pale rose.

ATIMUKTAKA. Mountain Ebony. This tree is commonly known as Harimantha.

B

BADRI or VADRI. Ziziphus Jujuba. The Jujube Tree, an attractive small or medium tree which flowers in April, its blossom forming pale green stars. The pulp of the fruit is eaten with sugar and the kernel raw. Sherbet is made from it and the Lac-insect feeds on this tree; its secretions are used for dyes, lacquer, ink and polishes.

BAKULA or VAKULA. Mimisops Elengi. A tree with fragrant flowers from which a drug of the same name comes. The flowers are white but change to a dull yellow; the fruit is an ovoid berry, yellow when ripe. The bark, that is pungent and sweet, is used for diseases of the gums and teeth and makes a good gargle.

BALALAKA. Flacourtia Cataphracta. A shrub with hairy leaves and edible fruit; it flowers in March and April. The fine-grained wood is used for combs and turnery.

BANDHUJIVA. Pentapetes Phoenicia. A plant with a red flower which opens at midday and withers away next morning at sunrise.

BANJULA or VANJULA. Hibiscus Mutabilis. Changeable Rose. Blooms in September and October and possesses large heart-shaped leaves; the flowers are three or four inches across, pure white in the morning, gradually changing to pale pink and red by evening.

BHADRA. The name of various plants and also a tree.

BHANDIRA. Mimosa Seressa, a lofty Fig Tree.

BHANDUKA. Calosanthes Indica. This tree that grows to 40 ft. in height is found throughout India. The bark is thick, the leaves smooth, hairless and glabrous.

BHAVA. Indian Laburnum. Monkeys are particularly partial to the sweet pulp of the pods in which the seeds lie; it is also used for flavouring tobacco and as a purgative. The wood is good for fuel and charcoal.

BHAVYA. Dillenia Indica or Dillenia Elliptica Speciosa. A tree that grows to forty feet; it is an evergreen; the flowers are large and white with yellow antlers and appear at the end of the branches. This tree is found in dense forests and is much cultivated round temples. The bark and leaves are medicinal and the juice from the acid fruit mixed with sugar makes a cooling drink. There is another small fruit tree allied to the Mangolia Speciosa of this name.

BHAYA. Trapa Bispinosa. A floating herb, that grows throughout India and Ceylon, the velvety flowers have four small white petals.

BIBHITAKA or BIBHIDAKA or VIBHIDAKA. Terminalia Bellerica. The Belleric Myrabolan, an important forest tree, though not considered useful for timber, being subject to insect attack. Its fruit however, which appears as a grey velvet ball, is used for medicinal purposes as also for dyes and tanning. The kernels yield oil and, if taken in excess, are said to produce intoxication. A favourite food of monkeys, squirrels, deer and other animals. The flower sprays, in creamy tassels, appear from March to June. The fruit is known as Myrabolan and this name is also used for the fruit of the Amlaka (Phyllanthus Emblica) and Terminalia Chebula, the three making a tonic called 'Trefala Churan'.

BIJAPURA. Citrus Medica. The Citron Tree.

BILVA. Aegle Marmelos, commonly called Bel. The Wood-apple which bears a delicious fruit that, unripe, is used for medical purposes. Its leaves are used in ceremonies in the worship of Shiva.

BIMBA or VIMBA. Momordica Monadelpha. A plant bearing a bright red gourd.

C

CHAMIKARA. A species of Thorn-apple.

CHAMPAKA. One of the Magnolias that grows wild in the Eastern sub-Himalayan tract and lower hills, also in Assam, Burma and Southern India; it is much cultivated. A tall, handsome, quick-growing tree that is evergreen, the flowers are deep yellow or orange and very fragrant. The root, bark, flowers and seeds are used for various purposes. The bark has stimulant, expectorant and astringent qualities, the flowers yield a fragrant oil used in opthalmia and gout.

CHANDAKA. The dried buds of this tree are the pungent and aromatic clove.

CHANDANA. Sirium Folium. The sweet-scented Oleander Rosebay which grows in rocky stream-beds on the lower Himalayas. It has evergreen foliage and flowers throughout the year. The blooms are deep rose, pink and white in sprays and are offered to Shiva. The poison, contained in the leaves, when made into a paste, is used for leprosy and skin diseases.

CUTA. A Mango Tree.

D

DADIMA or DADIMAH. Punica Grantum. The Pomegranate which grows throughout India and is indigenous to Persia and Afghanistan. A large shrub or sometimes small tree with numerous ascending branches. The flowers are funnel-shaped and orange in colour. The fruit is hard globose and yellow, tinged with red when ripe. The root-bark is a vermicide. The juice is appetizing and tonic, useful in fever, dyspepsia, biliousness and heartburn and has other curative properties.

DARBHA GRASS. Poa Cynosuroides, a grass used at sacrifices.

DEVADARU. A variety of Pine, probably the Mast Tree, so-called on account of its tall straight trunks being ideally suited for the masts of sailing ships. A beautiful tree revered by the Hindus, who plant it near their temples. Bats and foxes appreciate its fruit.

DEVAPARNA. The Divine Leaf, a medicinal plant.

DHANVANA. Grewia Asiatica. A small tree, widely cultivated in India except in East Bengal. The flowers are yellow.

Various other plants have this name.

DHANWARIA. Echites Antidy Senterio, a twining plant.

DHARA. Woodfordia Floribunda. Red Bell Bush, a small, spreading shrub which flowers from December to May and from which a red dye is obtained from the bright red blossom.

DHATRI. Sterospernum Aciderifolium.

DHATURA. Datura Fastuosa (Solanaceae). An annual poisonous shrub with a strong disagreeable smell that grows throughout India. The flowers, similar to the convolvulus in shape, are purplish white outside and white inside; the fruit is a small prickly ball closely packed with smooth yellowish-brown seeds. The leaves, flowers and seeds are used medicinally and are narcotic and soporific. Fomentations of the leaves are said to relieve the pains and swellings of rheumatism and the dried flowers, when powdered, are inhaled for asthma and bronchitis and coughs.

DHAVA. The shrub, Grislea Tomentosa, which is common throughout India, the scarlet flowers on long spreading branches appear in the hot season.

DHUVA. One of the Acacia family.

DRONA. A small tree bearing white flowers, commonly known as Ghalaghasiya or Halaksiya.

DUKULA. A plant from the stem of which very fine cloth is made.

DURVA. Panicum Dactylon. Bent Grass.

G

GAJAPUSHPI. Elephant Flower, a kind of Arum.

GHALAGHASIYA. See DRONA.

GOSHIRAKA. A Sandal Tree.

GULAR. A resinous tree, fragments of which, put in water in a loshta, are used for ceremonial purposes.

H

HARISHYAMA. See SHYAMA.

HATAKA. A thorn-apple that is golden in colour.

HIJJAL. See NICHULA.

HINTALA. Phoenix Sylvestris. The Wild Date Tree or Toddy Palm. Forests of these trees cover considerable areas in India and the trees give an excellent yield of palm, oil, mats are woven from the leaves and baskets from the stalks as well as ropes.

I

J

JAMBHU or JAMBHUH. Eugenia Jambolanum. The Rose Apple or Java Plum, which is sacred to Krishna and planted near temples. This tree grows throughout India and is a medium sized evergreen. The flowers, that are fragrant and of a whitish

colour appear from March to May. Vinegar is distilled from the juice of the fruit, a one-seeded berry, blackish purple when ripe. The bark, leaves and fruit have other medicinal properties.

JAMBUKA. A kind of grape without pips.

JAMNU. Prunus Padus L. Bird Cherry.

JAPA FLOWER. China Rose or Shoe Plant, which has large single bell-shaped flowers of a rich chinese red. These are used for decoration at festivals. The crushed flowers are used for shoe polish.

K

KADALA or KADALI. Musa Sapientum. The Plantain or Banana Palm, which has a soft perishable stem and is poetically a symbol of the frailty of human existence.

Several plants such as Pistia Stritiotes and Bombay Hepthyllum.

KADAMBA. The Plant Nauclea Cadamba.

KAHLARA. A white water-lily.

KAKUBHA. See the ARJUNA Tree.

KALAGURU. A species of Sandal Tree.

KALAYAKA. Various leguminous seeds, chiefly Phaseolus. Also some kinds of pulse and vetches.

KALEYAKA. A fragrant Aloes-wood.

The yellow Sandal Tree.

A kind of Turmeric.

The Plant Curcuma Xanthorrhiza.

KAMANARI. A species of Mimosa.

KAMRANGA. Averrhoa Carambola. A small densely branched tree with variegated white and purple flowers and one variety produces an edible sweet yellow fruit.

KANDI. Amorphophallus Campanulatus, a plant having a bulbous root, which is cultivated throughout India. The tuber is astringent and sweet, easily digestible and increases appetite. It is considered useful for abdominal tumours, colic and obesity.

KANYA. Aloe Perfoliata. This tree produces fragrant white flowers in March and April.

Several other plants, one of which is the Tube-rose.

KAPIMUKA. The Coffee Plant.

KAPITHA. The Jack-fruit, Feronia Elephantum, which is cultivated throughout India and indigenous to Southern India. A moderate sized deciduous tree with spines; the flowers are numerous, small, dull red, pale pink, changing to greenish yellow. The many-seeded large globose berry is used for innumerable purposes both culinary and medicinal.

KARANJA. Pongamia Glabra. The flowers of this tree in white short sprays appear when the new leaves are developed. It is a medicinal tree from which an embrocation is made for skin diseases. The juice is applied to sores and used for cleaning teeth as it has antiseptic qualities.

KARAVIRA. Another fragrant Oleander that is common to many parts of India in the rocky stream beds of the lower Himalayas, fringing roads and rivers. The foliage is evergreen throughout the year, but at its height during the rains; the flowers are deep rose and white, single and double. The sap is poisonous.

KARNIKARA. Pterospternum Acerfolium, also called Cassia Fistula. The common name of this tree is Kaniyar and it is one of the Indian Laburnums.

KARPURA. Ficus Glomerata. In April, the new leaves of shining dark red, lend it a beautiful appearance; its fruit is much relished. This tree is commonly known as Rumbal or Umbar.

KASANARI. Gmelina Arborea. The Liquorice Plant.

KASHAS. Reeds or Rushes.

KASHASTHALI. Bignonia Suavolens. The Yellow Elder.
A Trumpet Flower, an extensive climber with clear yellow flowers of which there are several varieties.

KEDUMBRA. A tree with orange-coloured fragrant flowers.

KETAKA. Pandanus Odoratissimus. Grows in the hottest parts of India. The leaves are drooping, green and glossy and the flowers crowded as a catkin-like spadix of orange yellow.

KHADIRA. Acacia Catechu. The Areca or Betel-nut Palm which grows in hot damp coastal regions of Southern India and Ceylon. Betel-nut is the fruit universally chewed by Asian people.

KHARJURA. Pheonix Sylvestris. See Hintala.

KICHAKA. Arundo Karka. A reed or hollow bamboo or rattling cane.
A tree of the same name.

KIMSHUKA or KUMSHUKA. Butea Frondosa. A tree with beautiful orange flowers and a quantity of milky sticky juice. It is called the 'Flower of the Forest' or 'Parrot Tree'. From January till March it is a mass of orange and vermilion; the flowers are constantly visited by birds. Dyes are obtained from these flowers, oil from the seeds and gum from the stem.

KOVIDARA. Bauhinia Variegata. A Mountain Ebony. One of the loveliest of Indian Trees; like the Pariyatra, it is called 'Tree of Paradise'. It has a dark brown smoothish bark; the leaves fall in the cold season and the large sweetly-scented flowers open on the bare branches. Their colour varies from magenta, mauve, pink with crimson markings or white with a splash of yellow. The tree is useful for its timber and yields oil and gum and has medicinal uses.

KRITAMALA. Another Laburnum.

KSHUPA. A plant or shrub with short branches and roots.

KUANDA. A plant commonly called Sakurunda, the yellow Amaranth or Barleria.

KUAYRAL. Another Mountain Ebony.

KUJAJA. Wrightia Awtidy Senterica, a medicinal plant.

KUMUDA. A white water lily, called the 'Moonlily', the other lotuses opening to the sun.

KUNDA. Jasmine Multiflorum.

KURAKA. Boswellia Thoriflora, the Olivanum Tree.

KURUBAKA DRONAPUSHPI. The Drona Flower; Drona meaning ' vessel ', ' cup ', or ' pot ', it probably produces a gourd.

KUSHA GRASS. Demontachya Bipennata. A sacred grass used for ceremonies it has long stalks and pointed leaves like rushes.

KUVALA or KUVALAYA. A water-lily, the blue species.

L

LAKUCA or LAKUKA. Artocarpus Lacucha. The same genus as the Jack-fruit; it is cultivated in the plains of Northern India.

LOHDRA. Simplocos Racemosa. The bark of this tree is used for a dye.

M

MADHAVA. A Mango Tree.

MADHAVI. The herb Basil.
A kind of Panic seed.
A species of leguminous plant.

MADHUKA. The Mohwa or Indian Butter Tree. A large deciduous tree with thick grey bark found in dry rocky hill regions, valuable for its delicious and nutritive flowers which bloom at night and fall on the ground at dawn. They taste something like figs and are much sought after by bears, birds and deer so that the natives, in order to collect the flowers for themselves, have to guard the trees.

MADHURA. Perennial Jasmine.

MADURA. A tree reminiscent of Cassia which has long sprays of pale pink flowers which appear in January and February. The fruit is a long flat bean. This tree does not appear to have any economic or medicinal uses.

MALLIKA. Evening Jasmine.

MANDARA. Erythinia Indica, the Coral Tree of which there are several varieties. It grows along the coasts and blooms from January till March; its rich red flowers make a striking appearance along the bare branches; they are unscented. New leaves are eaten in curries and the wood, which neither splits nor warps, is used for carved articles.

MATULINGA. A Citron or Sweet Lime.
MAUNJA. A kind of grass.
MRITASAMJIVANI. The ' Reviver of the Dead ', a herb.
MUCHUKUNDA. Pterospernum Suberifolium, a white variety of Calotropis Gigantica, a Thorn-apple.
MUCHULINDA. Probably connected with the ' Muchi Wood ' or ' Coral Tree '.
MYRABOLAN. See AMLAKA.

N

NAGA. Mesua Ferres, a small tree.
NAGAVRIKSHA. A mountain Shrub.
NAKTAMALA or NAKTAMALLAKA. Caleduba Arborea or Dalbergia Arborea.
NALINA. Nelumbium Speciosum. A water-lily.
NARCAL GRASS. Phragmites Karka Trin. A species of Reed.
NARIKELA. A tall unbranched tree with a terminal plume of pinnate leaves ; its flowers are yellowish and resemble stiff catkins. The nut is edible and oil is obtained from it which is used for soap, shampoos and culinary purposes ; it is also useful for the manufacture of candles.
NICHULA. Barringtonia Acutangola, commonly called Hijjal.
NILASHOKA. An Ashoka with blue flowers.
NIMBA. Azadirachta Indica. A tree with bitter fruit, the size of an olive ; the leaves are chewed at funerals and are said to ward off sickness and, when dried, keep off insects ; the timber is similar to mahogany.
NIPA or NIPAKA. A species of Kadamba Tree.
NIVARA or NAIVARA. Wild Rice.
NYAGRODHA. Ficus Indica. The Indian Fig Tree.

O

OSHADI. An annual plant that dies after opening.

P

PADMA. A pink lotus, sometimes this flower is used as a symbol of the Goddess Lakshmi, consort of Vishnu, who is often seen carrying this flower.
PADMAKA. Costus Speciosus or Arabicus, a kind of Fir.
PALASHA. Butea Frondosa. A tall straight tree that grows to 40 or 50 feet in the plains from the Himalayas to Ceylon and Burma. The petals of the flowers are bright orange red, covered with a silvery hair.

PANASA. Like the Kapitha, this tree, Artocarpus Intergrifolia is also a Jack-fruit which bears the largest edible fruit in the world, weighing up to 100 lbs, round and irregular; it is in great demand but less favoured than the Mango or Plaintain. This tree grows in the forest in the Western Ghats.

PARABHADRAKA. Erythinia Fulgens. A Coral Tree which bears angular spikes of rich red blooms along its bare branches from January to March.

PATALA. A tropical climbing plant.

PATALI or PATALIKA. Bignonia Suavolens. A tree with sweet-scented blossom, possibly the red Lohdra.

PINJARA. Mesua Roxburghii. A medium-sized tree found in the mountains of East Bengal and the Eastern Himalayas. The leaves are dark green and glossy and the flowers composed of four pure white petals and large golden antlers.

PIPAL or PIPPALA. The Pipal, a Fig Tree, Ficus Religiosa.

PIYAL or PRIYALA or PRYALA. A tree similar to the Madhuka.
The common Oil Plant.
A vine-like plant.

PRIYAKANYA. Known as Saj and Maddi, a common forest tree that yields excellent hard timber.

PRIYANGU. Fragrant seed, Italian Millet.
Long Pepper.

PRIYANGU KATUKI. Saffron.

PRIYANKARA. Various plants.

PUNNAGA. Rottleria Tinctoria. The flowers of this tree produce a yellow dye.

PURNA. A Cypress.

PURNASA. Sacred Basil.

Q

R

RAJIVA. A red lotus.

RAKTACHANDAN. The red Sandal-tree.

RANJAKA. Barbadoes Pride. The Redwood Coral Pea Tree. This tree grows to the height of ten feet and large sprays of flowers divided into smaller sprays appear at the end of the branches; they are vermilion streaked with yellow, later becoming entirely red. This tree is medicinal and used for healing wounds and as a purgative; the charred wood is employed in the manufacture of ink.

The Peacock Flower, which is associated with the God Shiva and therefore sacred to the Hindus.

S

SALA. Shorea Robusta. The Sal Tree.

SALLAKA. Bignonia Indica. The Gum Tree. Deep blue flowers in clusters appear at the beginning of the hot season and fade later to pale silver when golden berries appear. A translucent green resin exudes from this tree, with a pleasant odour. The wood, gum, bark and fruit all have medicinal value. The timber is known as Lignum Vitae or Brazil Wood.

SANDHANI. A medicinal herb. 'That which produces a salve for wounds'.

SAPTACCHADA. Stercula Foetida. Poon or Devil's Tree, a wild Almond. The black seeds of this tree are roasted and eaten like chestnuts but, taken raw, bring on nausea and vertigo.
Seven-leafed Milk Plant.

SAPTAPARNA. Alstonia or Echites Scholaris, the Seven-leafed Tree.

SARALA. Pinus Longifolia, a species of Pine.

SARJA. White Murdah.

SARPAT GRASS. Saccharum Bengalense Retz (S. Sara Roxb.). One of the sugar canes.

SASTILATA. A long winding creeper.

SHADVALA. Fresh green grass.

SHAIVALA. Vallisneria Octandra or Bexica, an aquatic plant.

SHALMALI. Bombax Malabaricum or Gossampinus Malabaricum or Salmalia Malabarica, the Red Silk Cotton Tree. A tall, handsome tree found all over India except in the driest areas. The large flowers, appearing in January or February, are brilliant scarlet and pink; they are much sought after by birds of every kind, and village people also consider them edible. In April, the fruit appears like green fingers which later become brown and split open when a fluffy cotton is freed and floats down to earth; this is used for tinder and stuffing pillows. An astringent gum is also obtained from this tree.
This is said to be a tree that grows in hell and the fabulous thorny rod from it is used for torturing the wicked.

SHAMI. Acacia Suma. This tree, possessed of very tough and hard wood is supposed to contain fire; it is employed for kindling by attrition.
The Shrub Seeratula Anthelmintica.

SHIMSHAPA or SHINGSHAPA. Dattergia Sisu. A species of Ashoka.

SHIRIBILVA. See under Bilva.

SHIRISHA or SIRISHA. Acacia Sirissa. A close relation to the Rain Tree.

SHIRISHKAPIR. Another of the Sirissas. This tree bears a small white flower which is fragrant at night. It also yields a gum similar to Gum Arabic. Its seeds are used in opthalmic diseases and are useful in leprosy.

SHURNAKA. A kind of grain belonging to the variety called Shashtika.
SHYAMA. A sacred Fig-tree at Prayaga.
The sacred basil.
A climbing plant, the Ichnocarpus or Echites Frutescens.
SILLEA. Cephalostashum Capitatum Munro, a large bamboo.
Datura Metel, a Thorn-apple.
SIMHAKESARA. Cassia Sianica. A Cassia with bright yellow flowers.
SINDHUVARA. Vitex Negundo, a small tree.
SLESHMATAKA. Cordia Myxa. Scarlet Cordia or Aloe Wood. This tree produces fragrant white flowers in March and April. The fruit is like a pale cherry, the nut is edible and the pulp makes bird lime ; it is also medicinal.
SUKLADRUMA. Simplocos Racemosa, a tree bearing white flowers.
SURA. Another Sal tree.
SUVARNYAKARANI. A sacred herb ' That which heals the skin '.
SVADAMSHTRA. Astercantha Longifolia.
SYANDARA. Dalbergia Ougeninensis, a tree similar to the ATIMUKTAS.

T

TAGARA. The Shrub Tabaernoemontana Coronaria. The Moon-beam or Waxflower, which has dazzling white flowers which women wear in their hair. The seeds of the three-ribbed fruit make a red dye ; the roots mixed with lime juice are used as a cure for eye diseases ; a fragrant powder and perfume are prepared from the scented wood.
TAKKOLA. Pinieta Acris.
TALA. Borassus Flabelliformis. The Palmyra Palm, one of the most important of Indian trees. A kind of sugar is obtained from it and the intoxicating drink ' Arrack ' is made from the fermentation of this juice. Fans, mats, etc. are made from the leaves which are also used for thatching ; the hard outer wood of the tree is made into posts and other domestic objects and the hollowed out stems used for waterpipes. The jelly-like pulp of the fruit and the soft kernels of the young fruit are cooked and eaten as vegetables. Brushes come from the ribs of the leaves and the stalks are used for torches.
TAMALA. Phyllanthus Emblica. A tree with black bark and very white blossom, beloved of poets such as Jai-deva. The fruit, Myrabolam, with that of another tree makes the tonic called ' Trefala Churan '.
TILAKA. A tree with beautiful flowers similar to the Sesamum Plant.

TIMIDA. Sesamum Indica, the Sesamum Plant which bears an oily seed used in cookery.

TIMIRA. An aquatic plant.

TIMISHA or TINISHA. A climbing plant with purple flowers.
A kind of Pumpkin or Water-melon.

TINDUKA. Diospyros Glutinosa or Diospyros Embryopteris, a kind of Ebony.

TINDURA. A Persimmon.

TUNGA. Rottleria Tinctoria. A Coconut.

U

UDDALA or UDDALAKA. Paspalum Frumentaceum. 'Uddalaka-pushpa-bhanjika' or the 'Breaking of the Uddalaka Flowers', is a game played by the people of the eastern districts of India.

USHIRAS. Spikenard.
A grass, the small Saccharum.
Andropogan Muricatus, a fragrant root.

UTPALA. The blue Lotus.
A water-lily.
Costus Speciosum, a plant.

V

VAMSHAS. Bamboos.

VANDHIRA. Memisa Sirissa.

VANIRA. Calamus Rotang, a reed.

VANJULA. Hibiscus Mutabilis.

VARANA. Craetova Tapia. A sacred and medicinal tree.

VASANTA DRU. A Mango.

VASANTA DUTA. Gaetnera Racemosa. A creeper.
A Trumpet flower.

VASANTA KUSUMA. Cordia Latifolia. The name means 'Having blossom in Spring'.

VATA. A species of Banian Tree.

VETRA. An ornamental Palm.

VETTAS. Rattan Canes.

VIBHIDAKA. A tree from the nuts of which dice are made.

VIBHITA or VIBHITAKA. The Tree Terminalia Belerica.

VIJAKA. The Citron Tree.

VISHALYAKARANI. A medicinal herb, " Healer of wounds inflicted by darts'.

W

X

Y

Z

WEAPONS

A

AGNEYA. The Fire Weapon or Weapon of the Fire-god Agni.
AINDRA. Indra's Weapon.
AISHIKA. An Arrow.
AKSHAS. Part of a wheel, probably the hub.
ALAKSHYA. A Weapon the course of which cannot be followed.
ANJALIS. Arrows resembling hands with the palms hollowed as in a salutation.
ANKUSHA. A Goad.
ARDEA. A Weapon called the 'Web'.
ARDRA. A Weapon producing moisture.
ARHANI. The Thunderbolt.
ASIRATNA. A kind of Arrow or Dart.
ASURA. A magic Weapon used by the Asuras.
AVANAGMUKHA. A Weapon with a bent or curved head.
AVARANA. The Weapon of Defence, or Protection.
AVYA. A kind of Dart or Arrow.

B

BHALLAS. Crescent-shaped Arrows.
BHINDIPALAS. Short Darts or Arrows thrown by hand or shot through a tube.
An iron Spear or Dart or a stone fastened to a string.
BIBHITAKA. A Weapon that breaks through or pierces.
BRAHMADANDA. The Rod of Brahma.
BRAHMAPASHA. The Noose of Brahma.
BRAHMASHIRA. 'Brahma-headed' therefore four-headed.
BUSHUNDI. A kind of Mace. This name is applied to various Weapons.

C

D

DAITYA. The Weapon of the Giants or Daityas.
DANDA. The name means Rod or Staff as for instance the Rod of Death or Punishment belonging to Yama.

DARANA or DARUNA. A Weapon that tears or splits asunder.
DARPANA. The Drying-up Weapon.
DASHAKSHA. The Ten-eyed Weapon.
DASHASHIRSHA. The Ten-headed Weapon.
DHANA. The Weapon that robs the enemy of his spoils.
DHANYA. The Weapon that brings good fortune.
DHARMA-ASTRA. The Weapon of Nemesis.
DHARMANABHA. The Sacred-navelled Weapon.
DHARMAPASHA. The Weapon that has the power of entangling the foe.
DHARMASHAKRA. The Weapon of Justice or Virtue.
DHRISHTA. The Active Weapon, a kind of Arrow.
DHRITI. The Weapon of Forbearance.
DITYA. The Titanic Weapon.
DRIDHANABHA. The Weapon of firm Navel.
DUNDUNABHA. A form of the Danda Weapon.

E

F

G

GANDHARVA. The Weapon of the Gandharvas.

H

HALA. A Weapon shaped like a ploughshare.
HAYASHIRA. The Horse-headed Weapon.

I

ISHIKA. The Ardent Weapon.
ISHU. A Mantra-propelled Arrow.

J

JAMBHAKA. Weapons in which evil spirits are said to reside.
JRIMBHAKA. Really magical formulas said to exorcise weapons possessing evil spirits.
JYOTISHTA. The Luminous Weapon.

K

KALAPASHA. The Noose of Death.
KALASHAKRA. The Discus of Death or Time as Death.
KALISHA. An Axe or Hatchet.
KAMARUCHI. An Arrow or Dart, one that is bright and able to go where it will.
KAMARUPA. A Weapon able to assume any form at will.
KAMKALA. A Harpoon.
KANDARPA. A Weapon exciting sex-desire, named after the God of Love Kandarpa.
KANKALA. A Weapon protecting the side, possibly a part of the armour.
KAPALA. A Helmet.
KARAVIRA. The Weapon of the Valiant Hand.
KARNIS. Barbed Arrows with two sides resembling ears.
KASHA. A Whip.
KAUMODAKI. The Iron-headed Club belonging to Shri Vishnu.
KINKINI. The word actually means a small bell, hence the weapon may have had bells hung on it.
KOUMADAKI. A Weapon that gives joy to the earth.
KROUNCHA or KRAUNCHA. The Heron's Beak.
KSHAPANI. An Oar or Net; something that destroys the destroyer.
KSHURA. An Arrow with a razor-like edge or a sharp blade attached to a shaft.
KSHURAPRAS. A crescent-shaped Arrow.
KULISHA. See KALISHA.
KUNTALA. A Sickle-shaped Weapon.
KUTA. A Poniard.
KUTAMUDGARA. A concealed Weapon similar to a Hammer.
KUVERA ASTRA. An instrument for showering gold.

L

LAKSHYA. A Weapon that can be followed in its course.
LOHITA MUKHI. The Bloody-mouthed.

M

MADANA. Weapon of Kandarpa.
MAHABAHU. The Great-armed or Great-handed Weapon.
MAHA-MAYA. The Great Magical Illusion or the Lying Weapon.
MAHANABHA. The Large-navelled Weapon.
MAHISHWARA. The Weapon of Shiva.
MALI. The Weapon that holds or binds.
MANADA. A particular magical Weapon employed by the Gandharvas.
MANAVA. The Weapon of Manu.
MARGANAS. The essence of the nature of an Arrow.
MATHANA. A Weapon that inflicts injury or suffering.
MAYADHARA. The Great Deception.
MODAKI. One of two beautiful mythical Clubs.
MODANA. The Weapon of Inebriation.
MOHA. The Weapon that causes loss of consciousness.
MOHAN. The Weapon of Attraction.
MOUSHALA or MUSHALA. A Club.
MURCHANA. One of the five Arrows of Kandarpa.

N

NAIRASYA. Magical Formulas pronounced on Weapons.
NALIKA. An Iron Arrow or Dart and also a Pike or Javelin.
NANDANA. The Joy-producing Weapon employed by the Vidyadharas.
NARACHA. An Iron Arrow.
NARAYANA. A Water-weapon.
NIRASHYA. The Discourager.
NISHKALI. The Peaceful.
NISHTRINSHA. A Sword, Scimitar or Falchion more than thirty fingers in length.
NIVATA KAVADHA. Impenetrable Armour.

O

P

PAINAKA or PINAKA. Shiva's Trident or Bow.
PAISHA ASTRA, PISACHA or PAISHACHA. The Ghostly Weapon used by the Pisachas. Also called the ' Red-flesh-eater ' or ' Devil's Missile '.

PANTHANA. The Moving Weapon.
PARAMO DARA ASTRA. The Supreme Clearing Weapon.
PARANMUKHA. The Great Mouthed Weapon.
PARA VIRA. Slayer of the Brave.
PARASHAVA. An Iron Weapon.
PARASHVADA. An Axe or Hatchet.
PARIGHA. An Iron Bludgeon or Iron-Studded Club.
PASHA. A Rope.
PASHUPATA. A Weapon sacred to Shiva.
PATH. A kind of Sword.
PITRIYA. The Weapon of the Pitris.
PRAMA THANA. The Churner.
PRASHA. A Bearded Dart.
PRASHAMANA. The Weapon of Destruction.
PRASHVAPRANA. A Weapon dealing with the vital airs.
PRASVAPANA. A Weapon causing sleep.
PRATHAMA. Vayu's Weapon.
PRATIHARATARA. That which neutralizes the effects of other weapons.
PURANG MUKHA. A Weapon that has its face averted.

Q

R

RABHASA. The Desolator.
RAKSHAS. The Titan-Astra which destroys the fortune, courage and life of one's foes.
RATI. The Weapon of Enjoyment.
RISHTIS. Swords, Arrows or Spears, Weapons of the Maruts.
RUCHIRA. The Approving Weapon.
RUDRA. The Rudra Weapon sacred to Rudra or Shiva.

S

SALA. An Arrow with short leads.
SAMVARTA. The Covering Weapon belonging to Kala or Time which he uses at the destruction of the worlds.
SANDHANA. The Arm Weapon.
SANTAPANA. The Weapon that burns up or scorches.
One of the Arrows of Kama or Kandarpa.
SARCHIMALI. That which has force or power.
SARPANATHA. The Weapon sacred to the Lord of Serpents.

SATYA ASTRA. The Weapon of Existence.
SATYA KIRTI. The Justly-famed.
SAUMYA. The Moon's Weapon.
SAURA. The Heroic Weapon.
SHAKTIS. Iron Spears, Lances or Pikes.
SHAKUNA. The Vulture-shaped Weapon.
SHALYA. A Dart, Javelin or Spear tipped with iron.
SHANKARA. A Weapon of Shiva's called the 'Cause of Welfare'.
SHANKAR ASTRA. The Weapon with a flaming mouth.
SHARNGA. The Bow of Vishnu.
SHATAGNI. A spiked Mace or a stone set round with iron spikes; it is named 'Slayer of Hundreds'.
SHATAPATRA. 'Having a hundred Feathers', probably an Arrow.
SHATAVAKTRA. The Hundred-mouthed Weapon.
SHATODARA. The Hundred-bellied Weapon.
SHIKARI. One of the two beautiful mythical Clubs.
SHILIMUKHAS. Arrows resembling Heron's feathers.
SHITESU. A sharp Arrow.
SHOSHANA. A Weapon used to dry up water and counteract the Varshana Weapon.
SHUCHIVANU. The Pure-handed Weapon.
SHUSHKA. The Dry Weapon.
SINHADAMSHTRA. A Weapon resembling Lion's Teeth.
SOMASTRA. The Dew Weapon.
SUNABHAKA. The Fine-navelled Weapon.
SURA ASTRA. A Weapon named 'The Blasting of Enemies' that steals away lustre and beauty.
SOUMANVA. The Weapon of the Controlled Mind.
SVAPANA. A Weapon affecting sleep.
SVANABHAKA. The Richly-navelled Weapon.

T

TAMASA. The Weapon of Inertia.
TEJASPRABHA. The Sun Weapon.
TOMARA. An Iron Bar, Crow-bar, Lance or Javelin.
TRIMBAKA. The Gaper.
TVASHTRA ASTRA. The Chaos-demon Astra, a weapon possessing the power of the Architect of the Gods.

U

USIRATMA. A Scimitar.

GLOSSARY

V

VALLA. See Bhalla.
VARSHANA. The Rain-producing Weapon.
VARUNA PASHA. The Noose of Varuna.
VATRA. The Blower, a Weapon sacred to the Wind-god.
VATSADANTA. A Weapon resembling Calf's Teeth.
VAYAVYA. A Weapon with the power of the Wind.
VIDDANA. The Weapon that rends or tears asunder.
VIDHUTA. The Strongly-vibrating Weapon.
VIDYADHARA. The Delighting Weapon, one belonging to the Vidyadharas.
VIKARNI. An Arrow.
VILAPANA. The Weapon causing lamentation.
VIMALA. The Stainless Weapon.
VINIDRA. The Weapon of Sleeplessness.
VIPATHA. A large Arrow.
VIPATRA. A Weapon resembling the Karavira Weapon.
VISHNUSHAKRA. The Discus of Vishnu.
VRITTIMAT. A Weapon that revolves like a wheel.

Y

YAMYA. The Dual Weapon.
YAUGANDHARA. A particular magic Formula spoken over weapons that belong to a king.